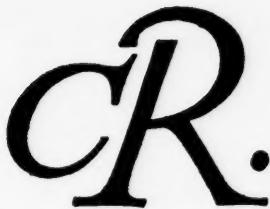


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## CONTRIBUTORS

*Joseph Needham* ("The Past in China's Present") is Sir William Dunn Reader in Biochemistry and a member of the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Cambridge University.

*Gretchen Ludke Finney* ("Music: The Breath of Life"), a former instructor in English at Carleton College and Smith College, now resides in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

*E. A. Speiser* ("Three Thousand Years of Bible Study") is Professor of Bible and Semitics and Chairman of the Department of Oriental Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

*Gabriel Jackson* ("Reflections on Two Loyalty Purges") is Professor of History at Wellesley College.

*Paul Oskar Kristeller* ("Humanist Learning in the Italian Renaissance") is Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University.

*John T. Marcus* ("The Mystique in History") is Professor of History at Hofstra College.

## THE PAST IN CHINA'S PRESENT

### A Cultural, Social, and Philosophical Background for Contemporary China

*Joseph Needham*

*(The following is the first half of a two-part article on the background of modern China. In this paper Professor Needham discusses the social and cultural development of China. In our next issue, he will present the philosophical aspects of China's history.—Editor)*

#### Introduction

THE ENSUING NOTES are based on discussions of the Oxford Political Study Group at Nuffield College and of the Universities and Left Review Club in London early in 1959. A biochemist by profession, I do not regard myself as primarily a student of contemporary affairs, nor am I a political economist, still less a journalist; but in the course of work with a number of collaborators on the history of science, scientific thought, and technology in the Chinese culture-area,<sup>1</sup> I have found myself deeply concerned with the origins and development of that culture, and have come to see its current changes against the social and philosophical background of many centuries. Indeed, I believe that only so can they be properly understood and appreciated by people of other cultures.

In the adoption of communism by China, this social system and philosophy has for the first time entered (in the language of physical science) a new and different "phase," has diffused across the boundary between two of the great historical civilizations, has been transplanted from one of these vast social

<sup>1</sup> "Science and Civilisation in China," in course of publication in seven volumes by the Cambridge University Press. Hereinafter abbreviated as SCC.

organisms to another. Everything has to be learned about this great phenomenon. To what extent did Chinese culture contain a "praeparatio evangelica"? How will it mold the gospel of collectivism in the future? Did China perhaps send contributions westward in earlier times from which it germinated? Such are some of the questions which surge into the mind.

### I. Bureaucratic Feudalism: the Non-hereditary Elite in the Non-competitive Society

Let us begin with a brief discussion of China's social structure through the ages. It is probably impossible to understand contemporary China without realizing that great modifications of social class-structure are involved there. If one does not feel sympathy with the urge towards a unitary class-structure of society, the desire for a socialist order, there is little hope of understanding what the Chinese are trying to do. On the other hand, it is quite clear that throughout history the class-structure in China was not at all identical with that of the West, though similarities were by no means absent.

It must at once be said that when one enters into the question of Chinese social structure, one finds oneself in the presence of a great debate which is as yet far from being concluded or even brought to a focus.<sup>2</sup> Although there are many differences of interpretation among scholars, I feel quite satisfied on the broad principle that during the past 2,000 years, roughly speaking, China did not have feudalism in the aristocratic military Western sense. Whether the Chinese system is known, as it was by the founding fathers of Marxism, as the "asiatic form of production," or as other people have called it, "asiatic bureaucratism" or "feudal bureaucratism," or as

<sup>2</sup> See the judicious essay of D. Bodde, "Feudalism in China," in R. Coulborn, ed., *Feudalism in History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 49; as also, of course, the classical writings of H. Maspero, "Le Régime Féodal," etc., in *Mélanges Posthumes sur les Religions et l'Histoire de la Chine*, Volume 3 (Paris, 1950); and M. Granet, *La Féodalité Chinoise* (Oslo, 1952).

the Chinese very often call it, "bureaucratic feudalism," or whatever other term one likes to adopt—it was certainly something different from anything that Europe ever knew. Sometimes I have been tempted to regard it as a disappearance of all intermediate feudal lords at an early stage in the unification of the empire (after the time of Chhin Shih Huang Ti in the —3rd century),<sup>3</sup> and the rule of the country by only one feudal lord, namely, the emperor, operating and exploiting by means of a hypertrophied instrument, the non-hereditary civil service, the bureaucracy, the mandarinate, recruited from the "scholar-gentry." It is debatable to what extent this should be called a "class" because it is clear that in different times and to different degrees it had a great deal of fluidity. Families rose into the "estate," if you like, of the scholar-gentry and sank out of it again; and during those periods when the imperial examinations played an important part in the recruiting of the civil service, families which could not produce the right talents and the particular skills and gifts for success in the examinations and the bureaucracy, were not going to survive more than a generation or two at a high level of society.

Thus the *shih*, the scholar-bureaucrats, were the literary and managerial élite of the nation for two millennia. We must not forget, therefore, that the conception of the *carrrière ouverte aux talents* was a Chinese invention and not a French or a European one. Indeed, it has been shown by chapter and verse that the theory of competitive examination for the civil service was taken over by the Western nations in the 19th century in full consciousness of the Chinese example,<sup>4</sup> even though the sinophilism of the Chinoiserie period had long given place to a certain disillusionment regard-

<sup>3</sup> The romanization of Chinese names and terms throughout this paper follows that modification of the Wade-Giles system in which an *h* is substituted for the aspirate sign.

<sup>4</sup> Têng Ssu-Yü, "Chinese Influence on the Western Examination System," *Harvard Journ. Asiatic Studies*, 7, 267 (1943).

ing the Celestial Empire and its mandarinate as a College of All Sages. Of course, the mandarinate was not as "classless" as has sometimes been made out, for even in the best and most open periods, boys from learned homes which had good private libraries had a great advantage. But in any case, the scale of values of the scholarly administrator differed profoundly in all ages from that of the acquisitive merchant.

Here there is no space to go into the details of this non-hereditary civil service which became so supreme in Chinese society after the Chhin and Han, but immediately the fundamental fact of its existence is stated, one can see its relevance to what is happening at the present time.<sup>5</sup> Surely the basic conception of a non-hereditary élite in a non-competitive society has much in common with the conception of membership of an organization like the Communist Party, especially when linked with the keen social morality now renewed in China. Is there not something strikingly similar in the dissociation of prestige and leadership from birth and wealth? Moreover, today we no longer have civil servants or bureaucrats of the old style entirely devoted to *theoria* and knowing nothing of *praxis*, but, on the contrary, an élite which understands a great deal about *praxis*, has itself participated in productive work, and may be doing so at the same time as fulfilling its administrative functions and in accordance with the new moral emphases. In other words, a communist ethical and sociological dynamic has built upon age-old Confucian instinct in forming the basic inspiration of the officials and peoples' leaders of today and tomorrow.

## II. The Inhibition of the Indigenous Development of Capitalism

The bureaucratic-feudal system of traditional China proved to be one of the most stable forms of social order ever de-

<sup>5</sup> A lapidary description of the essentials of traditional Chinese bureaucratic society and their significance for modern developments has been given by E. Balazs in *Asiatische Studien*, 1953, 77.

veloped. From the time of the first Chhin emperor in the -3rd century down to that improbable medical revolutionary of 1911, it played a leading part in assuring for Chinese culture a continuity shared only partially by Israel among all other nations of the world. But above all it meant (as in India) that there was no indigenous development of capitalism.<sup>6</sup> The mandarinate system was so successful that it inhibited the rise of the merchants to power in the State; it walled up their guilds in the restricted role of friendly and benefit societies; it nipped capitalist accumulation in the bud; it was always ready to tax mining enterprises out of existence and to crush (as it did in the +15th century after the death of Chêng Ho)<sup>7</sup> all mariners' efforts towards sea trade and expansion; and finally, most significantly, it creamed off for two thousand years the best brains from all levels of society into its own service. This last function alone might temptingly offer itself as an aid to explaining why the feudal system could have given way to capitalism in the West as it did, while bureaucratic feudalism continued calmly on its way. The hereditary aristocratic principle was not calculated to get the best brains into the positions of most power, and when the brightest minds found themselves in merchant business or as royal advisers rather than short-circuited in the hierarchy of the Church, the days of Western feudalism were numbered. In China, on the other hand, the fact that the administrators were drawn from the most intelligent men of their age meant that they did not arouse among the population that intense dissatisfaction with effete and inefficient descendants of aristocratic houses which must have played a great part in the downfall of Western feudalism.

It is necessary therefore for Westerners to realize today

<sup>6</sup> As Schurmann has shown, in discussing traditional Chinese property concepts in *Far Eastern Quarterly*, 15, 507 (1956), the basic idea of individual *freies eigentum* on which capitalist society was built was absent in China.

<sup>7</sup> The famous eunuch admiral. For his voyages, see J. J. L. Duyvendak in Yusuf Kemal, "Monumenta Cartographica," Vol. 4 (1939), pp. 1411ff., and "China's Discovery of Africa," (London, 1949).

that for the Chinese, capitalism was something essentially and intrinsically foreign, something imposed upon them at a certain time by Westerners enjoying a military strength based for a few short centuries on their fortuitous development of modern technology. Nor did capitalism in China follow quickly upon the first contacts with Westerners. The Portuguese merchants of the +16th century and the Jesuit missionaries of the +17th had no effect whatever upon Chinese economy, great though their influence was in other ways. Not until the beginning of the 19th century, at the time of the Opium Wars, was it borne in upon the scholar-gentry that modern industrialization was really inevitable. Hence there supervened an interesting transition period when some of the leading bureaucratic officials such as Tsêng Kuo-Fan, Tso Tsung-Thang, and Li Huang-Chang set up arsenals and factories with funds part-private and part-bureaucratic, and with engineers from abroad.<sup>8</sup> This type of industry, however, naturally lacked the long organizational experience possessed by Western firms, and proved unable to compete with them, so for most of the century Chinese governments and officials found it easier to grant concessions and let the foreigners do the work which they understood. The resulting stranglehold greatly discouraged Chinese-owned enterprise, and it was not until the first World War, when the European powers temporarily relaxed their profit-making activities in China, that indigenous Chinese capitalist industry got a chance to develop. This was based on a new group of people, so small in number that it is difficult to call it a class, which had long been associated in a comprador capacity with the enterprises of foreign firms in China, and

<sup>8</sup> See the three books by Chhen Chhi-Thien, *L'in Tsê-Hsü, Pioneer Promoter of the Adoption of Western Means of Maritime Defence in China* (Peiping, 1934), *Tsêng Kuo-Fan, Pioneer Promoter of the Steamship in China* (Peiping, 1935), and *Tso Tsung-Thang, Pioneer Promoter of the Modern Dockyard and the Woollen Mill in China* (Peiping, 1938). Compendious and relatively new is Têng Ssu-Yü and J. K. Fairbank, *China's Response to the West; a Documentary Survey* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954).

which had been successful in applying modern banking methods to Chinese conditions. Even so, it never conquered sectors wider than those of light industry, most of the mining and heavy industry remaining in the grip of foreign interests together with most of the railway transport. Still, it was in strong alliance with them against any socialist movements, and naturally tended to make itself respectable by associating with the most highly respected scholarly official families. The Kuomintang party was nothing but the outward expression of this inward social reality, and its organs of repression had to be quite sharp because in the last analysis capitalism was a form of society which the Chinese had never been accustomed to, did not want, and were less and less prepared to accept. The permanent nightmare of the Kuomintang was that the "dark Satanic mills" of uninhibited capitalist enterprise were evidently not the only gateway to modernization and industrialization.<sup>9</sup> Another and a better road lay open.

### III. The Need for Quantitative Accounting

One of the most important aspects of the classical mandarinate was what I call its "nosphomeric" character. Probably the reader has never encountered this word before, but that would not surprise me because I invented it myself. It takes me back to a place in Kweichow province during the war where the Bishop of Hong-kong and I both had to "anchor" (as the drivers' fraternity used to say) because our trucks were out of order. Thus we had to stop a few days at the

<sup>9</sup> The resolve to move directly from traditional Chinese society to socialism was extremely clear and explicit in the writings of the early Chinese revolutionaries of the anti-Manchu period. They were also highly conscious of many precursor features in traditional Chinese thought and life which were congruent with socialism; indeed, they touched in one place or another upon most of the matters which are discussed in the present review. See a recent interesting analysis of the writings of such men as Fêng Tzu-Yu, Chu Chih-Hsin, and Liang Chhi-Chhao about 1906, by R. A. Scalapino and H. Schiffrin in *Journ. Asian Studies*, 18, 321 (1959). The book by J. R. Levenson, *Liang Chhi-Chhao and the Mind of Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), is also worth reading, though marred by a slant of ironical disparagement of the great struggling intellectual figures with whom he deals.

little mountain town of Annan. We talked a great deal about the question of "graft and squeeze." "Old China Hands," of course, would descant for hours about the practice of graft and squeeze at all levels in traditional Chinese society, and I came across it myself in many cases. For example, I met one old *hsien chang* (city magistrate) in Kansu province, an aged man who used to tell how things were done in the old days —how when the *chuang yuan* in charge of eight counties came round, there would be a supper with chopsticks and bowls all of silver, and these would be sent round to his apartment afterwards. This had been done for centuries; it was the recognized thing. It was his "rake-off," and everything went well as long as people did not take more than their proper rake-off and did not upset the system by trying to be "honest" and refusing these things. It was part of the way the society worked. The old expression, *ta kuan fa tshai*, "to rise in the civil service and acquire great wealth," was the standard thing in classical Chinese society, and it is clear that this ought not to be called "graft and squeeze" because it was the way in which a non-currency society operated. Since from ancient times the taxes were collected at the periphery and sent to the capital in the form of actual kind, of barges loaded with rice or other grain, or bales of silk, and since also it was the practice in most dynasties never to pay a living wage to provincial officials, it was obvious that the only thing that they could possibly do to run the local show was to take their 10 per cent or whatever it was, and this was accordingly done. I therefore said to Bishop Ronald Hall, "What we want is a non-pejorative word for graft and squeeze." After he left next day at about five o'clock in the morning, I found when I got up a little piece of paper under my door saying "Acts V.1." When I got to a Bible and looked this up, I found it was the story of Ananias and Sapphira who kept back part of some money which was supposed to be given to the church. Although St. Peter disapproved of this,

with serious consequences to the poor benefactors, the word used in the text has itself no bad connotation. So, as *nosphizein*, meaning to sequester, and *meros*, a part, gave just the word wanted, I therefore invented and still propose to use the term "nosphomeric hydraulic (see section VI) Asian bureaucracy."

What has all this to do with the issue? Just that profound changes in administrative "morality" had to accompany social and industrial changes if the old society was to be transformed into a modern nation. I knew personally many men in China during the war who did not care to make the old society work, who felt that it was totally out of keeping with modern needs, who were, in fact, believers in what one might call "quantitative accounting," and not prepared, for example, to sign as having received ten dynamos when, in fact, they had only received eight. I knew engineers who lost their jobs and had plenty of trouble with the Kuomintang in consequence. These men were good engineers, knowing little about communism and often quite non-political. They were really the forerunners of what we must call the new moral emphasis. This is a cardinally important feature of communist China and derives directly from the creation of a new society. It is not unlike the new ethos of business morality which grew up in the early period of capitalism when there was a similar association between puritan morals and quantitative accounting. But the parallel is at a different level; in China the new élite are not building upon the old basis. In fact, they have arisen because they alone are appropriate to a socialist society based on natural science and technology. This can only work by quantitative measurement and impersonal, though not consequently inhuman, computation; and the new moral emphasis, deeply Confucian, as we shall later see, is the characteristic ethical accompaniment or superstructure of a society which may well continue to be "hydraulic" but which in a neotechnic age can never again be "nosphomeric."

#### IV. Civil Versus Military Ethos

Another very vital aspect of the bureaucratic form of feudalism was that it generated a civil and not a military ethos in Chinese society. I remember once, about 1943, sitting in a very dirty little village street at the time of a truck breakdown with Sir Frederick Eggleston, who was then Australian Minister in Chungking. We were putting in time while waiting by drinking tea in one of those *chha kuan* or tea-houses in the street of a Szechuan village. Seeing before our eyes the general medieval conditions, the lack of sanitation, the poverty of the people (all very different from what one finds in villages now), he turned to me and said, "Why, at any moment one might imagine a knight and a troop of men-at-arms come riding down the village street." To which I replied, "Well, yes and no, because in fact it would have been a rather cultured person in a litter, certainly not wearing armor. The men-at-arms would have been very poorly equipped, and, in fact, the magistrate would have been ruling basically by the prestige of literary culture, enormously important in Chinese traditional society, and not by open dominance and force."

I did not mean, of course, that the ultimate sanction was not force, as in all societies which man has known. But one can hardly over-estimate the significance of the radical absence of the aristocratic principle in traditional Chinese society through the ages. Broadly speaking, the aristocracy, such as it was, comprised merely the relatives of the reigning imperial house, and its members, kept rigidly under control and not allowed to enter the bureaucracy, were always under suspicion as possible contending figure-heads, and went altogether into oblivion when the dynasty changed. The last thing they were allowed was military command. It is a commonplace to refer to the old Chinese proverb about not using good iron to make nails and not expecting good men to be

come soldiers, but I believe that it represents something permanent in the Chinese scale of values. Here, of course, there is a tremendous contrast with Japan, where the feudal values were much more similar to those of military medieval Europe. It is true that China today takes great (and, indeed, legitimate) pride in the feats which were accomplished in the Korean war, when the Chinese army stood up to the best-equipped Western troops which could be brought against them in a way that had not hitherto been known in the last three or four centuries of history. It was a very different story, indeed, from the Taku Forts, for instance, or anything that happened in the Opium Wars. Nevertheless, I consider that this classical predominance of the civil as against the military ethos will continue to give to Chinese society a basically pacific outlook for many centuries to come.

#### V. Organic Unity of Rulers and People

Certain traits in Chinese society are very persistent. Here I am not thinking of the quotations from the Confucian or Taoist classics, which many Chinese Marxist leaders often include in their writings, but all along the line one sees an emphasis on unification of and with the people. This is not a new thing; it existed in all the best ages in China. "Heaven sees as the people see; Heaven hears as the people hear."

For example, when I was in Peking in the summer of 1958, there was great enthusiasm about the dam which was being built in rapid time, largely by the voluntary labor of the citizens of the capital, to make a lake which would be valuable for the irrigation of the dry and dusty plain north of the city, and in which the Ming tombs would be mirrored. It was notable that Mao Tsê-Tung himself and the members of the Central Committee went out and, like most other people in Peking, did their day or two shovelling earth and doing other construction jobs. This was the symbolic blessing for a widespread movement during the past two years when

great numbers of administrators have returned for a time to the farm and the bench to renew their experience of how it feels to be one of the working people. Indeed, I should not hesitate to regard these manifestations as the extended modern equivalents and lineal descendants of the ancient rite in which it was customary for each emperor and his ministers to plough the ceremonial furrows every year. One of the great annual ceremonies in the old days, this solemnity, carried out at the Temple of Agriculture in the south of the city, symbolized the organic unity of the Son of Heaven and his people before the powers of Nature. But in socialist China, the distinction between rulers and ruled has disappeared. "Every cook must learn to rule the State," and every administrator must remind himself periodically of how it feels to be cook and carpenter. The principle of unity which the sages and good officials of old understood is thus manifested as never before.

The converse of the respect entertained by the emperor for the people was the very deeply based respect for authority which throughout the ages was felt by them. The emperor was the Son of Heaven. He had a mandate from Heaven to rule "all under Heaven" (i.e., all China); but this was something very unlike the "divine right" of kings in Europe. The emperor's right was conditional. In ancient times he was held responsible in person for the prosperity of the country, in particular for securing the right sort of weather for agriculture. As high priest of a cosmic *numen* as well as king, he offered sacrifices on behalf of the whole people, securing the blessing of Heaven not only by them but also by himself behaving in the way which Heaven approved. By Heaven's mandate he ruled as long as his rule was good—but if it degenerated, natural calamities such as flood and drought would come as warnings, and rebels would arise to claim the mandate. If there emerged a successful pretender to the throne, or a new and more powerful dynasty, it was always

held that the previous imperial house had forfeited the mandate from Heaven by not behaving in the way appropriate to imperial rule. Thus the dual function of priest and king evoked in the Chinese people a very deeply based respect for authority. It generated the idea that a government is not simply a thing which has been created by a man, not something which has come about because one man is more powerful than another, but that it is part of a certain cosmic order. Such conceptions are surely close to modern Western thought about social evolution, trends of history, and revolutionary necessity based on concrete social forces.

#### VI. The Hydraulic Tradition and Public Works

There is another important feature in the social background of present-day China. One of the best-known theories about the origin of bureaucratic feudalism in China maintains that it was connected with the overwhelming importance of hydraulic engineering in ancient times. I believe there is a great deal in this opinion (though some of the loudest proponents of it can be remarkably tedious), and I found when I was in China during the war that a great many Chinese historians think so, too. The reason for the necessity of irrigation goes back to the geographical and indeed the geotectonic character of the country. The importance of irrigation canals for intensive agriculture, water conservancy for preventing floods, and canal transport for the gathering in of the tribute to the Imperial Court from the provinces, led to the establishment of a veritable tradition of great public works which is absolutely living in China today as much as it ever was in the Han or the Chhin or the Thang dynasties.

All this illustrates and symbolizes the tradition of great public works which exists in China and which is still in full vigor. In fact, the role of the Communist Party there, in putting the accent on great public works, is something which is much less new to Chinese society than it might be to any

other nation in the world, except, perhaps, the Egyptians and the Sinhalese. Here, again, contemporary China is very much in line with the best and most brilliant dynastic periods of traditional China.

### VII. The Tradition of Nationalized Production

Westerners should remember, moreover, that in China there is a very old tradition not only of great public works, but also of "nationalized production." People who are not familiar with Chinese history, or not very familiar with it, perhaps do not realize how ancient this is. It goes back at least to the —4th century, possibly to the —5th in proposal form, but it was actually enacted in —120, just before the time when the Old Silk Road began to carry caravans of Chinese produce, especially silk, to Persia and the West. Then, when we come to —81, we get that truly marvelous work, the *Yen Thieh Lun* (*Discussions on Salt and Iron*), still well worth reading today by anyone interested in economic history,<sup>10</sup> which purports to be a verbatim account (it is not really so, of course, but it is not far off) of a great debate held about —83 between bureaucratic officials and feudal-minded Confucian scholars who were not convinced of the necessity for a powerful civil service. The point at issue was, of course, the "nationalization" of salt and iron. I am quite aware that the word "nationalization" must not be used with regard to these things with exactly the same meaning which we apply in speaking of nationalization in the modern sense. Yet it was definitely a take-over of the production of salt and iron by the State, and officials were put in charge of it. A number of Iron Bureaus were set up all over the country where iron was smelted and cast. Iron casting was already a well advanced technique in —2nd-century China,

<sup>10</sup> A partial translation by E. M. Gale, *Discourses on Salt and Iron, a Debate on State Control of Commerce and Industry in Ancient China* (Leiden, 1931), exists, continued by E. M. Gale, P. A. Boordberg, and T. C. Lin in *Journ. Roy. Asiatic Soc.*, (North China Branch), 65, 73 (1934).

though not mastered until the +14th century in any other part of the world,<sup>11</sup> and the function of the Bureaus was to make cast-iron agricultural tools, such as hoes, spades, and ploughshares. At a later period in the Han there were further measures of nationalization, bringing under government control the making of wine and beer.

Thus national ownership of the means of production is something clearly in the traditional background of modern Chinese thinking, and although I have given Han examples, it is possible to get many others from later periods (e.g., the Sung) in the Middle Ages. Such conceptions of State control, therefore, are not for the Chinese daringly revolutionary, but rather a natural development arising out of their own history. Here is a very vital point in which Chinese attitudes differ from those of some Western peoples who have been so permeated by the conceptions of individual capitalist industrial enterprise during the past three hundred years.

It is not that enterprise is lacking. Much in China today reminds one of the parallel of the American frontier in the 19th century, the expanding opportunities of the Far West. This is now being repeated with all its implications for the development of the Central Asian parts of China, yet under the inspiration of socialist cooperative altruism, not of individual aggrandisement or money-making.

### VIII. The Order of Precedence of the Estates

In connection with this question of State production, I should like to refer next to the traditional order of precedence of the estates of Chinese society. We need not call them classes; indeed, it may be very dangerous to do so without further thought. Most people probably know that famous

<sup>11</sup> See *SCC*, Vol. 5, Part 1, and, in the meantime, J. Needham, "The Development of Iron and Steel Technology in China," the Dickinson Memorial Lecture (London: Newcomen Society, 1958); or, more shortly, J. Needham, "Remarques relatives à l'Histoire de la Sidérurgie Chinoise" (with English translation) in "Actes du Colloques International 'Le Fer à travers les Ages,'" Nancy, 1955, *Annales de l'Est*, No. 16 (1956).

phrase, *shih nung kung shang*, the four estates of society: the scholars, then the farmers, then the artisans, and finally the lowest "class" of all, the merchants. Assuredly this is one of those patterns which are always at the background of the Chinese mind.

This traditional proverbial phrase has been resounding down through the centuries ever since the end of the feudal period and the beginning of the unified Empire in the —3rd century. The low emphasis placed on merchants as well as the parallel low emphasis placed on soldiers is, I think, quite significant for the instinctive mental attitude of the Chinese people at the present time. The ruin of Kuomintang China was quite naturally attributed to the nefarious activities of the banker-comprador-merchant group, and according to my experience, intellectual and university circles during the war were never in any way enamored of the un-classical Kuomintang, with only very few exceptions. They were not at first sympathetic to the Communists either (I shall have more to say about that presently), but they certainly had no conviction that Kuomintang capitalism represented the natural line of evolution of Chinese culture. Perhaps it was the instinctive knowledge of the Kuomintang leaders that their economic system was profoundly un-Chinese which led them to talk so much about the feudal virtues, and to try to popularize forms of social asceticism such as the New Life Movement which assorted very oddly with the accumulation of great wealth in few hands. The paradoxical result could not avoid a strong impression of hypocrisy, and, in fact, only a very small percentage of the intellectuals were attracted by it.

The Kuomintang order was implicitly *shang shih kung nung*, and everyone could see that it was un-Chinese. The orthodox Communist order was obviously *kung nung shih shang*, and the Party under Mao Tsê-Tung saw at an early stage that this could not work either. The solution was found first in *nung kung shih shang* for immediate results, and in

the total scrapping of all such distinctions for the long-term program.

### IX. The Mystique of Farming

Now, with the position of farming<sup>12</sup> we come to another point which illuminates, I think, more of the background of current thought in China. Farming was always recognized as fundamentally important; the farmers were anciently high up in the scale. They were the second in honor, ranking immediately after the scholars. Chinese culture has always embodied a deep love of the countryside, which, after all, did occupy 90 per cent of the people. A certain moral stature of the farming people, or the peasant farmers, if you like, is very marked in Chinese culture. Just as in Roman times there was a great *mystique* about the return of the senator or the consul to his birthplace, the return to the farm, the return to the soil, to till the fields again which his ancestors had tilled, so also this pattern is very much present in Chinese feeling, even in aesthetic appreciation. The theme of the *Kuei Thien Lu*, constantly recurring, is an example of it. So many poets wrote of a return to the country, a home-coming to the ancestral farm, a getting away from public life, a resigning of official appointments, the hanging up of official hats, and the retirement to the countryside.<sup>13</sup> This is a very great feature of typical aesthetics throughout the ages. One must understand that the Communist Party in China derived a great deal of moral stature from the very fact that it had lived "in the wilderness" (though this is not quite the right term, but in the country) with the peasants. In other words, it has had the attributes of a "country party" (though in a

<sup>12</sup> The classical book on Chinese agriculture in English is that of F. H. King, *Farmers of Forty Centuries* (London, 1927), but it should now be complemented by the admirable study of R. Dumont, *Révolution dans la Campagne Chinoise* (Paris, 1957).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, the famous essay of Thao Yuan-Ming (+365 to +427) translated by H. A. Giles in his *Gems of Chinese Literature: Prose*, 2nd edition (Shanghai, 1923), p. 103. Cf. also his translation of Liu Yü-Hsi's (+772 to +842) essay on the same theme, p. 148.

very different sense from the party of the same name in Australia). To be revolutionary and rural at one and the same time was a feat which could have succeeded only in China perhaps, and yet one which was essential for gaining and keeping the leadership there.

### X. The Mystique of Manual Work

Closely allied to the classical admiration for farming there went throughout Chinese history an appreciation of the dignity of manual work. It may not have been the dominant tradition among the literati, but it was emphasized century after century by the poets. No doubt this is one reason why Tu Fu, Pai Chü-I, and other great classical poets are so appreciated in contemporary China, for time after time they praised the farmer, satirized the bureaucrat, and castigated the callous military officer. Perhaps this tendency was partly connected with the paramount necessity for some at least of the officials to have a good knowledge of water conservation, public works engineering, transportation techniques, and military technology. Abundant instances could be given, but it may suffice to mention a few outstanding names such as Chhao Tsho and Chang Jung in the Han, Yüwén Khai in the Sui, and Su Sung and Shen Kua in the Sung. Typical reforms periodically introduced, such as those of Wang An-Shih in the +11th century, made medicine, botany, geography, and hydraulic engineering parts of the imperial examination system. When Yen Yuan, an eminent scholar of the early Chhing period who had himself studied and practiced medicine, undertook in +1694 to establish a new type of education, he laid much emphasis on practical and technological subjects. The Chang Nan Shu Yuan, as it was called, had not only a gymnasium but also halls filled with machines for demonstration and practice, special rooms for mathematics and geography, and facilities for learning hydraulic engineering, architecture, agriculture, military arts, applied chemis-

try, and even pyrotechnics. But, of course, the contrary attitude of aloofness from manual and practical work was also very common in China, where the culture of the administrators was, after all, primarily literary.

All cultures and civilizations have suffered from the divorce of *theoria* and *praxis*. But the greatest thinkers, experimenters, and artists have always seen that only when the manual and the mental (or the intellectual) are combined in one individual's experience can mankind reach its highest stature. This combination has been of the highest importance in the history both of theoretical science and of technology; it gave weight to the materialist speculations of the pre-Socratics, it brought out the best in Aristotle, and it inspired the Renaissance engineers whose genius culminated in Leonardo. Men such as Palissy, Perrault, Papin, Watt, Stephenson, and Edison fill the subsequent centuries. Moreover, the combination not only brings true knowledge of Nature, but also deeper sympathy with those members of society whose contribution must still for some time to come be primarily manual.

There is no question that at the present time a great *mystique* of manual work has grown up in China. I believe that this is a true expression of the mass feeling of the people, guided, perhaps, by the party leadership, but by no means something imposed from above. It was inevitable and necessary that it should happen some time if the Chinese people were to coalesce into a single, unified, and, as far as possible, classless society. There may be exaggerations in particular times and places due to excessive enthusiasm, but the movement is fundamentally sound. To think of manual work as a humiliating punishment in China is a lamentable misunderstanding propagated by certain Western writers.

Yet the present valuation of manual work in China, it should be emphasized, is but a passing phase. Such work is not regarded as an ultimate end in itself, but a means of

bringing the intellectual and the non-manual workers into more fruitful relation with the material world, and giving them in the process better understanding of their fellow men. On the other hand, the farmers and workers greatly welcome this opportunity of personal contact. Meanwhile, every form of mechanization is being pushed ahead as fast as possible. At the Ming Tombs Reservoir Dam in the summer of 1958 there were bulldozers, graders, and an elaborate earth-fill supply system of railways, both standard gauge and narrow. But the voluntary participation of hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens of Peking was meant to be a demonstration of their solidarity with the whole working people, as well as an expression of determination to get on with the job of re-creating their vast country. In Szechuan a moving remark was made to me by a Chinese friend who pointed to the children on the pavement watching the hauliers working their great loaded carts up the hills, and said, "With the truck production rate the way it is now, or better, when those boys grow up they'll never have to do that back-breaking work—it will be altogether a thing of the past!"

### XI. Morality and Machiavellianism

Before leaving altogether the subject of the civil service, we might consider for a moment what some people call tough-minded realism and others Machiavellianism. A curious paradox occurred recently. A scholar of Columbia University has written an interesting, but in my opinion perverse, book on the history of the bureaucratic-feudal civil service in Asian countries.<sup>14</sup> Intending to delineate the characteristics and origins of hydraulic bureaucratic feudalism in many different parts of the world, he seeks to refer back to it all the most unlovely manifestations of State power and coercion in modern societies. Omitting all reference to such phenomena

<sup>14</sup> K. A. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

as city-state tyranny or oligarchic dictatorship, to Byzantine autocracy, absolute monarchy, or imperialism, to the Holy Inquisition, or to the fascist forms of developed capitalism, he fixes (most unjustly) upon Asian bureaucratic feudalism as the completest type of tyranny and upon Chinese "oriental despotism" as the most perfect example of it. The facts disagree radically with his general view, but no matter. To make the readers' flesh creep, he quoted a good deal from the *Arthaśastra*, that great Indian work of the +2nd century on Machiavellian power-politics. It was quite striking that although his chief fire was directed against the Chinese mandarinate, he was not able to find for his purpose any parallel to this work in Chinese literature. And, indeed, there is no parallel to it.<sup>15</sup>

What the full explanation of this may be is uncertain—perhaps the analogous texts of the Warring States period have not come down to us—but it is certainly true that Confucian sentiment would always have been very much against any such codification of amoral power techniques as one finds in the *Arthaśastra*, with its plain-spoken and even enthusiastic advocacy of the poisoning and torture of opponents, or the use of spies, saboteurs, ambushes, and all kinds of stratagems.

This raises the question of how much hypocrisy there was in Chinese history. No doubt a good deal, as in the history of all nations, but perhaps less than one would think because throughout the ages the best of the scholars were deeply and honestly attached to the high morality of Confucianism. Certainly all the poets emphasized it, and in China many of the greatest poets were officials themselves. After all, there were

<sup>15</sup> Partial parallels may be found in the Fa Chia literature of the —4th and —3rd centuries (the School of Legalists, cf. *SCC*, Vol. 2, pp. 204ff.), and the use of spies is recommended in the —4th-century military classic *Sun Tzu Ping Fa* (Master Sun's Art of War), cf. L. Giles' translation (London, 1910), pp. 160ff.; but there is nothing approaching the cold-blooded systematization of the *Arthaśastra*. The handiest translation of the latter is by R. Shamasastri (Mysore, 1929).

standard techniques for managing people, if one might so put it, such as gifts of various kinds, reciprocal obligations, customary honors, and so on. Besides, as has been mentioned already, the art of persuasion was of age-old cultivation in Chinese life. It may be that such characteristics originate from special but fortuitous technological features at early stages when a civilization is crystallizing. The eminent sinologist, H. G. Creel, pointed out long ago<sup>16</sup> that in feudal Chou China the lords were poorly provided with defensive armor while the commoners were familiar with a powerful weapon, the cross-bow, long ere Europe had it. Hence propaganda and indoctrination were raised to a high level as social techniques, as indeed is abundantly evident from many places in the Chinese classics. Again, as perhaps would be expected in a non-industrialized society, austerity of life was blessed by Confucian ethical authority. Of course, there were many exceptions, rulers who delighted in extreme luxury, etc., but they usually came to a bad end, as the Bureau of Historiography never failed to point out. Broadly speaking, the needs even of the high officials were always comparatively simple. All this throws light on the present situation. The Chinese spirit does not admire unprincipled tactics, dishonest dealing, or personal luxury. Behavior of a competitive or acquisitive character is not considered worthy of the magnanimous man (*chiün tzu*), whose place is with the people, like the leaders of the "bandits" of Liangshan, leading from within, not from above.

## XII. The Mandarinate and Public Opinion

Sometimes it is said that in medieval China there was no such thing as a public opinion. I am well satisfied that this is a wholly mistaken idea. The scholar-gentry, and especially

<sup>16</sup> H. G. Creel, *La Naissance de la Chine* (Paris, 1937) pp. 344ff. His argument is abundantly supported by ancient Chinese texts, e.g., *Analects*, XIII, xxx; *Huai Nan Tzu*, chap. 15, translated by E. Morgan in *Tao the Great Luminant* (Shanghai, 1933), pp. 186, 192ff.

those who were in office in the civil service, in the mandarinate, the *kuan liao* people, were extremely influential, and persuasion was their characteristic method. Sometimes they succeeded in gaining the attention and capturing the good will of an emperor for many years, and in other cases, where for one reason or another, the emperor "got across" his civil service, then there were many things which could not happen because the civil service or mandarinate would not give way. It was immensely tied to age-old custom and there were many things on which it refused to compromise. One might mention in passing the institution of the censorate, the *yü shih* or *yü shih pu*, which originally grew up as one of the departments of State, and was in its heyday concerned with the control or verification, to use a French phrase, of the functioning of the civil service at the periphery, in the provinces. Many a tale and many an opera theme in old China concerned the actions of censors in bringing abuses to book at great personal risk, and there are many historical instances of the execution or exile of one remonstrator after another failing to silence the protests of the scholars. Thus the literati in the civil service at any particular time, and especially, of course, those at the capital, did constitute a public opinion of a wide and educated character, and this was generally not at all insensitive to the opinions of the mass of the common people.<sup>17</sup>

### XIII. Social Cohesion: Family, Merchant Guild, Peasant Community, and Secret Society

I am still not able to leave the sociological field because something must be said about the traditions of social cohesion in China. This is a fundamentally important aspect of life and thought in any culture. The first thing one must mention

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, C. P. Fitzgerald's study of the bureaucracy under the Thang empress Wu Hou, *The Empress Wu* (London, 1956); or J. T. C. Liu, "An Early Sung Reformer: Fan Chung-Yen," in J. K. Fairbank, ed., *Chinese Thought and Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 105.

is the institution of the large family.<sup>18</sup> There is no doubt that although during the last 100 years the really large family has been steadily dying out, yet in ancient and medieval times it was a very important reality. Many things were connected with it—that Confucian tradition, for example, which so much disapproved of jealousy; that profound courtesy which was the ideal aim on all occasions; and the phenomenon of "face-saving," which sprang from a desire to spare embarrassment to others.<sup>19</sup> All this will be rather obvious, I think, to anyone who has read any Chinese literature. The cohesion of a large family depended on forbearance. One of the emperors enquired of an old gentleman who was brought to him as having attained the great aim of the large family, "five generations in one hall," how it was done and how his family has been so successful. He said, "It was just forbearance." The emperor asked again and said, "It must be something more than that." But the aged man wouldn't add anything more except that it was all a matter of forbearance, one for the other. I often have occasion to quote from an old man who wrote a book about Hangchow in +1235. He never signed his name to it but called himself the *Kuan pu nai tê ong*: "the old gentleman of the irrigated garden who attained (peace) through forbearance."

In 1958 I traveled some 12,000 miles within the country, by road and plane as well as by train, gathering further material for our work on the history of science and technology in the Chinese culture-area, and meeting hundreds not only of scientists and scholars, but of all sorts and conditions of men. My most outstanding impression was the unreality of the idea so cherished in the West that the population is dragooned to perform its tasks. On the contrary, everywhere one sees cooperation, spontaneity (sometimes outrunning government planning), enthusiasm for increasing production

<sup>18</sup> Cf., e.g., Hsü Lang-Kuang in *Amer. Journ. Sociol.*, 48, 555 (1943).

<sup>19</sup> Cf., e.g., Hu Hsien-Chin in *Amer. Anthropologist*, 46, 45 (1944).

and modernization, pride in an ancient culture equipping itself to take its rightful place in the modern world. What has been done in public health, social services, industrial development, and advancing amenities of all kinds, and what one sees going on under one's eyes, would be absolutely impossible without the willing and convinced cooperation and social cohesion of all age-groups and all types of workers, manual and intellectual. A new type of social engineering, the product of leadership from within, not from above, raises up movements as urgent popular demands and not as any mechanical result of drives from the central government.

The carry-over of the large-family ethos into spontaneous working groups was also observable during the formation of the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives during the second World War.<sup>20</sup> It happened that I was closely acquainted with much of that work. During the great *diaspora* when the Chinese were leaving the coastal districts to the tender mercies of the Japanese and were coming over in millions to the western provinces, one found a flotsam and jetsam of artisans from all over the country meeting together and almost spontaneously setting up productive cooperatives—paper-makers, shoemakers, foundry workers, and so on. I knew them in many cities, but particularly at Paochi in Shensi. There you could not help feeling that the large-family mentality was at

<sup>20</sup> An interesting account of years of work with the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives is given by P. Townsend in his *China Phoenix* (London, 1956). Precious reminiscences by one who was described as their "founder, spark-plug and mainstay," Rewi Alley, are contained in his books *Yo Banfa* (Shanghai, 1952 and Peking, 1955), and *The People have Strength* (Peking, 1954), and are represented also in his poems, collected, for example, in *Gung Ho* (Christchurch, N. Z., 1948). Experiences as a Cooperative Organizer in a very remote part of China are related by P. Goullart in *Forgotten Kingdom* (London, 1955). The magnificent work of the C.I.C. technical training colleges was described in *Training Rural Leaders: the Shantan Bailie School, Kansu Province, China*, published by the F.A.O. (Washington, D. C., 1949). Today these colleges are incorporated in a nation-wide system inspired by the same ideas of public service and retaining much of the original method, while the general conception of rural industrialization on a cooperative basis has become an accepted and integral part of the whole vast re-organization of Chinese society into rational units which combine agricultural with industrial activities.

work; they formed rather tight groups which cooperated effectively and ran their businesses often under very considerable difficulties, even in the face of opposition by the Kuomintang government in the later phases of the war.

When we come to the relationship of merchants to one another, it is generally known that China did have merchant "guilds."<sup>21</sup> But the merchant guilds in China never acquired anything like the importance in society of the merchant guilds in the West, never became powerful in State government, never encroached, one might say, upon the power of the imperial bureaucratic administration. The mandarinate saw to it that they did not, and as will later be suggested, we have here a good clue to the failure of late Chinese society to generate any Renaissance, and ultimately of its failure to originate *modern* science. In fact, we do not find any conception of the city-state in China. The old expressions "Stadtluft macht frei" (The very air of a city makes a man free from feudal service) or "bürgerliche Rechtsicherheit" (Security of city folk under the law) are meaningless where China is concerned. The city in China was always essentially a node in the administrative network of the Empire, and the whole conception of "aldermen" or "masters of guilds" running the city in an independent way, often in the teeth of opposition from local feudal lords, and often allied to the royal power—all that kind of thing was unheard-of and unknown in China. Sir John Pratt made an interesting and amusing contribution when in one of his books he recalled how in 1862 some of the Western European businessmen established in Shanghai, one of the treaty ports, petitioned the Government in Peking for a grant of a city charter.<sup>22</sup> The perplexity which this caused at the imperial court in Peking must have been ex-

<sup>21</sup> The standard reference is H. B. Morse, *The Guilds of China, with an Account of the Guild Merchant or Co-Hong of Canton*, 2nd edition (Shanghai, 1932), but the subject needs fuller study.

<sup>22</sup> J. T. Pratt, *The Expansion of Europe into the Far East* (London, 1947), p. 17.

traordinary, because no one there would have had the faintest idea as to what they wanted, or had ever heard of such a thing being granted to any body of merchants. But all this does not alter the fact that mutual aid occurred in plenty. The Chinese merchant guilds certainly engaged vigorously in helping their members. At Chhang-ting in Fukien I once had the pleasure of staying in one of the beautiful old-style hostel buildings with courtyards and elegantly carved halls and pavilions which were put up in different cities for the reception of merchants from other provinces when they came there to buy and sell. We thus have another aspect of social cohesion in the merchant guilds even though they never became important politically, as in Europe.

Another aspect of Chinese life which should not be underestimated is the great extent to which mutual aid took place among the peasant farmers. Throughout the ages there was cooperation at the village level, sometimes more, no doubt, and sometimes less.<sup>23</sup> Mutual aid teams were not something absolutely new and unheard-of when they were encouraged at the beginning of the present government. In medieval times the affairs of the village were largely left alone by the administrative officials of the county town; as long as the *hsiang chang* came up with the right amount of taxes and fulfilled the demands of the corvée or military conscription service, he was free to consult with the clan elders on all matters of land utilization, road and bridge repairs, and other communal questions. I am not trying to idealize the picture or to minimize the extent of thoroughly bad government, rapacious landlords, and rich peasants at different times in Chinese history—only to emphasize that in the bet-

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Tsu Yu-Yüeh, "The Spirit of Chinese Philanthropy: a Study in Mutual Aid," *Columbia University Studies in History, Economics and Public Law*, 1912, No. 125 (Vol. 50, No. 1); and more recently, Yang Lien-Shêng on reciprocity, "The Concept of *Pao* as a Basis for Social Relations in China," in J. K. Fairbank, ed., *Chinese Thought and Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 291.

ter times, at least, mutual aid in the community was a firm reality.

Apart from all this we must not forget to take into account quite another side of the medal—that is, the high degree of cohesion within voluntary and what indeed may be called subversive organizations. Apart from the committees of village and clan elders in different times and places, apart from the old open Taoist or Buddhist societies which engaged in compassionate enterprises like bridge-building and road construction, there were also throughout Chinese history the secret societies.

The importance of these can hardly be over-estimated, for a powerful degree of social cohesion was characteristic of them. Even in our own time no foreigner could live long in China without coming in contact with these societies.<sup>24</sup> Although I personally had no intimate knowledge of them, anyone could sense the strength of the bonds which they could imply, as in the White Lotus Sect, the Szechuanese *Ko Lao Hui*, or the Triad Society. Even during the second World War there were secret associations of truck drivers like the *Huang Pang* and the *Chhing Pang*, believed to have descended from pilots' associations on the Grand Canal, and all of us who had to do with trucks came into contact with them.

<sup>24</sup> There is no adequate and systematic treatment of the subject of Chinese secret societies, but one may mention W. Stanton's *The Triad Society or Heaven-and-Earth Association* (Hongkong, 1900); J. S. M. Ward and W. G. Stirling, *The Hung Society*, 3 volumes (London, 1925); B. Favre, *Les Sociétés Secrètes en Chine* (Paris, 1933); C. Glick and Hung Shêng-Hua, *Swords of Silence* (New York, 1947); L. Comber, *Secret Societies in Malaya* (New York, 1958); and the extraordinary compilation of M. L. Wynne, *Triad and Tabut* (Singapore, 1941). The Western literature on Chinese secret societies has a peculiar character in which everything is seen as through a glass darkly. This is not surprising, since it constitutes a kind of nightmare folklorism largely based on the depositions of illiterate Chinese working-men to sinologically incompetent police officials. The few books written by capable sinologists have all long been out-dated by the progress of knowledge in Asian studies, but they are still worth reading. I refer to G. Schlegel's *Thian Ti Hwui: the Hung League or Heaven-and-Earth League* (Batavia, 1866), photolitho reproduction (Singapore, 1956); J. J. M. de Groot, *Het Kongsiwezen van Borneo* ('s-Gravenhage, 1885). P. Pelliot's devastating review of Ward and Stirling remains true, alas, to this day (*T'oung Pao*, 25, 444, 1928).

I am not saying that all this was a very desirable phenomenon. Everyone knows that overseas in Southeast Asia these secret societies, which readily succumb to pure gangsterism, have been the cause of a great deal of trouble, and there is little to be said for them. But in traditional Chinese society, in the set-up which we have already discussed—an apparent autocracy but, in fact, a government by custom and compromise, where the Confucian tradition kept things sweet up to a certain point, but where things were liable to go wrong when exceptionally greedy officials arose or when there was a general decay of society, as happened periodically towards the end of dynasties—there one can see the importance of the people's cohesion in the secret societies. Undoubtedly they played an extremely important part in Chinese life.

They were, indeed, closely associated with that great series of popular rebellions which runs throughout Chinese history.<sup>25</sup> Generally these movements arose in their might at the end of effete or tyrannical dynasties; such was the uprising of Huang Chao against the Thang (+874 to +884) on the one hand, or that of Chhen Shêng (—209) against the Chhin on the other. In such circumstances the reigning house with all its hangers-on was usually overthrown, and replaced by a new one emanating from some suitable personality on the rebel side, a new house destined no doubt to accomplish in due course a similar cycle but endowed with a century or two of fresh vigor and good government. Thus the founder of the Han, Liu Pang, was one of the leaders of the revolt against the Chhin, and Chu Yuan-Chang, 1500 years later the founder of the Ming, had long been in revolt against the Mongol dynasty of the Yuan. Sometimes, however, a great rebellion would occur "prematurely" and succeed only in weakening

<sup>25</sup> All histories of China deal with these, whether as large as Cordier's or as concise as Goodrich's. But the special attention given to them is one of the interesting features of *An Outline History of China* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1958). A brief treatment worth reading is that of H. Franke, *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 1, 31 (1951), part of his inaugural lecture at Cologne.

the dynasty so that it fell not long afterwards—such was the situation with the Taoist Yellow Turban Rebellion of +184 and the semi-Christian Thai-Phing Revolution (+1851 to +1864). This last “State within a State” was perhaps the greatest revolutionary commonwealth in Chinese history, and is regarded with much pride by contemporary Chinese scholarship, which has devoted deep study to its analysis. Today its banners hang, as if in a Westminster Abbey, in the Great Hall above the Wu Mén gate of the Imperial Palace at Peking.

The bitterness of these class struggles was very great, and a landlord general such as Wu San-Kuei in +1640 could prefer to join with the Manchu foreigners rather than sink his differences with the successful peasant leader Li Tzu-Chêng. Modern Chinese historians are giving particular attention to the study of these rebellions and to the secret societies, often Taoist or Buddhist in affiliation (since Confucianism was so closely associated with the scholar-gentry), which organized and inspired them. It is as if a revolutionary Germany should trace with loving admiration the exploits of the Anabaptists, or a progressive England commemorate the places where the Levellers and the Diggers performed their historic actions. But while in Europe many of these movements could flourish openly, Chinese society was generally so unified that the oppressed groups had to have recourse to secrecy, establishing an underground resistance pattern which transmitted century after century a tradition of social solidarity.

The lesson for us in all this is that the many examples of extreme individualism among Chinese scholars and thinkers, upon which Western sinologists have so delighted to expatiate, have given a certain distortion to our conception of the Chinese people. The much-advertised eccentric solitaires have, I think, blinded us somewhat to the more essential and deep-rooted cohesive factors in Chinese society. What this clearly leads up to is the cohesiveness of the present time. It

forms the indispensable historical background for the mutual aid groups in villages which led on to those cooperative forms of agriculture covering already a couple of years ago 90 per cent of the country, and to the large-scale communes which originated during the latter part of 1958. Rural communist China was not created in a day. The problem was how to capture those Artesian depths of social solidarity emotion which had been one of the main motivating forces of Chinese society for two millennia. No mere nationalism could ever have done this—only a doctrine which could fully evoke that mixture of enlightened self-interest and concern for the happiness of one's neighbor which had welded together the "black-haired people" indissolubly in a hundred battles against the feudal bureaucrats. The cooperatives and communes are only extensions, I believe, of certain cohesive features in Chinese society which have been developing all through the ages.

As for the new venture of the *jen min kung shé* (translated rather riskily as "communes"),<sup>28</sup> this development was only just starting when I was last in China, but I conceive it to be primarily an extension of the system of cooperative production which could be seen at work everywhere there. Deeply in accord with old Chinese social traditions, this principle is, I believe, welcomed and accepted by the overwhelming majority of Chinese working people. Current criticism of the "communes" seems to rest, often enough, on limitations of outlook characteristic of highly industrialized Western societies. People there who dislike the idea of families eating in restaurants and canteens know only Western homes provided with gas stoves, electric washing machines, etc. If they had had any experience of the slavery of the Chinese women throughout the ages to the charcoal or brushwood stove and the primitive water supply, they would understand that the cooperative farm or works restaurant and

<sup>28</sup> Cf. A. L. Strong, *The Rise of the Chinese People's Communes* (Peking, 1959).

the public baths today seem more like a heaven on earth to millions. Until recently only the very largest cities had piped gas, running water, and main drainage. Side by side with these improvements an immense effort of re-housing is under way. Emancipation of women to follow careers, whether on the farm, railway, or in the factory, or in intellectual work, is one of the most remarkable features of present-day China, as I know from personal contacts with many friends all over the country. Nor am I particularly shocked by the idea of restaurants where one does not have to pay, having enjoyed many a meal under such conditions in the Kibbutzim of Israel as well as in the educational institutions of my own country. This is a matter of pride in China today, not of compulsion or regimentation—the direct reward of the successes of agricultural production.

#### XIV. Elements of Democracy

Lastly, a word or two about "democracy." Most Europeans who have lived in China will agree that although the celebrated Greek origins were no part of the Chinese inheritance, there is a vein of instinctive democracy running very deeply through the culture. The almost complete absence of special "built-in" forms of linguistic address between superiors and inferiors (so sharply contrasting with Japanese), the age-old recognition of intellectual capacity absolutely irrespective of birth, the profound humanism of Confucian ethics, and the classical acknowledgement of the human dignity of the farmer and the artisan, all illumine a living experience of contacts with and among Chinese people. It will not be forgotten, moreover, that the right and duty of "rebellion against un-Confucian princes" was a leading tenet of the chief school of Chinese social philosophy for nearly two millennia before the parallel doctrine in Europe received the blessing of the Reformers. One may conclude, I think, that although traditional China had no institutions which we could call

"representative" democracy in the Western sense, it was certainly not, as some have thought, a sheer autocracy. It was a highly constitutional empire, if with an unwritten constitution, and governed profoundly by custom. The representative institution as such is new in China, the elections for membership of State assemblies, for governors of cities, or mayors, as they now call them. Yet a very powerful element of democracy was, I am convinced, present in traditional China.

Many Western observers of contemporary China appear to be haunted by an impression of imposed "uniformity" in current Chinese life. They seem to entertain some nightmare conception of male and female prison-barracks inhabited by robots with identical responses.<sup>27</sup> I believe this to be quite illusory, corresponding to nothing in my experience of Chinese modern working-class housing, or of the working people themselves. What I can see happening is more like this: when people accustomed to eating meat once a year find themselves able to have it once a week, it is not surprising that they all react in the same way. When people who for generations have hauled barrows groaning over mountain ways, or tracked junks upstream against the Yangtze's current, see for the first time engines coming to their rescue, their reactions tend to be uniform. When scientists who formerly had to waste their best years in empty laboratories feel the support of big financial backing and popular encouragement, their new inspiration takes almost identical shape. These are the deepest "uniformities" that I can see in China today.

At the same time, it is quite true that the Chinese have adopted whole-heartedly a particular political philosophy, and there is undoubtedly a great deal of social influence on

<sup>27</sup> Here the official Chinese translators of current Chinese Government information services and bulletins have been somewhat at fault. Knowing probably only the American connotation of the word "dormitory," i.e., a building containing a number of small "apartments" (or, in English usage, "flats"), they have succeeded in giving to Europeans the somewhat bizarre impression that large sections of the Chinese working-class had been induced to abandon family life and to sleep in segregated halls holding as many beds as hospital wards or the "dormitories" of English "public schools."

individuals to accept it, but there is much latitude in interpretation. The learned and technical journals, for example, are full of lively controversial articles. Wall newspapers give great opportunity for the expression of criticism on the part of the rank and file in every institution. Moreover, extreme care is taken to foster all kinds of new ideas arising among the mass of the people, and to encourage originality. It was very moving to see in Chinese cities in July of 1958 the processions and the rejoicings in honor of local inventors and innovators. "Kan hsiang, kan shuo, kan tsol" (Dare to think, dare to speak, dare to act) was the watchword painted on every city and temple wall in China that summer—this does not seem to me the kind of slogan which one would expect in a dictatorial authoritarianism.

*(To be concluded in our next issue.)*

## MUSIC: THE BREATH OF LIFE

*Gretchen Ludke Finney*

WHEN ORPHEUS DESCENDED into Hades and revealed his power to give life to the dead, or when by his song he moved trees and rocks or tamed wild beasts, and when Arion caused stones to build the walls of Thebes, they performed miracles that gave many future centuries cause to wonder. If certain philosophers agreed with Clement of Alexandria that Orpheus and the Theban, too, "under cover of music . . . outraged human life, being influenced by daemons, through some artful sorcery,"<sup>1</sup> occult philosophers argued that demons and magic are not necessarily evil. At all events, Orpheus and Arion demonstrated that music could cause not only ecstatic death but could restore life, and the Renaissance philosopher was not one to let such a miracle go unexplained.

He had at his disposal several explanations of how music might give life to dead things, but the two most common ones—if explanation was considered necessary—had to do with various kinds of "spirit." One originated, to an important degree, in Hermetic philosophy, that body of literature so filled with astrological, cabalistic, alchemical, and neoplatonic notions that was compiled during the first few centuries after Christ and attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. The other seemed to be dictated by common sense.

### I

Hermetic writings were translated, studied, and brought into prominence by the Renaissance neoplatonists, especially by Ficino and Pico della Mirandola. It was certainly Ficino

<sup>1</sup> *Exhortation to the Greeks*, I, Loeb ed., p. 9.

who developed the occult spirit-theory of music into one that had wide acceptance. According to this theory, music worked on the "spirits" of man. Spirits, in a medical sense, were believed to be (in Robert Burton's words) "a most subtle vapour expressed from the blood." By means of spirits, soul controlled body and body reached to soul; thus spirits carried out all the functions that we today attribute to the nervous system. But Ficino, in this connection, broadened the concept of spirits from their medical meaning to a cosmic one in which the whole universe was believed to be filled and animated by spirit, a spirit that linked lowest stone to purest angel.

This expansion of meaning did not, however, originate in Ficino. From Aristotle, from the Stoics, and from Hermetic philosophy came the idea of spirit, or *pneuma*, which pervaded the universe and gave life and motion to everything; it cemented all parts into a whole. The word *spiritus* or *pneuma*, in ancient science, meant literally *breath*, and "... could be applied to a vapor, a gas, a disembodied spirit or even to the Holy Ghost."<sup>2</sup> This conception was not incompatible with Christian belief: the "Spirit of God" moving "upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2) gave life and form to the world. World spirit was sometimes equated with the soul of the universe, the Platonic *anima mundi*, though it was usually thought to be different. It was the median between the soul and body of the world, just as spirits in man were the knot of his soul and body.

Spirit mounted in degree of purity from inanimate objects, through man (where it provided natural, sensitive, and animal spirit in ascending order), to higher forms of spiritual being, outward material form varying in correspondence with the subtlety of its spirit. Demons and genii were "personalized" world spirit, clothed in air. Angels were pure spirit, with no visible body: in heaven "Bodies are purer, than best

<sup>2</sup> F. Sherwood Taylor, *The Alchemists* (New York, 1949), p. 7.

Soules are here," wrote John Donne.<sup>3</sup> As Glanvill and others explained, it is not "suitable" to suppose that nature should make "precipitous leaps" from one thing to another, from our grossest matter to "pure unbodied Spirits."<sup>4</sup> Milton, too, in *Paradise Lost*, described spirit in plants, flowers, fruit, ascending by gradual scale to animal spirits in man. From matter, to spirit in nature, to spirit in man, "by gradual scale sublim'd," man is linked to the angels: from the Almighty "All things proceed, and up to him return."<sup>5</sup> George Hake-will, in 1627, turned to this animating spirit of the universe to combat the misanthropic belief that the world is in a state of decay. It is not Soul, he wrote, but "the *immortall Spirit* of the *Creator*" by which the world "is in some sort quickned and formaliz'd," by which God "is able to make the body of the World *immortall*, and to preserve it from dissolution, as he doth the *Angels*."<sup>6</sup>

The alchemists, following the teaching of Raymond Lull (d. 1315), called this spirit the "quintessence," because it was of a higher nature than the four elements (fire, air, water, earth) of which the universe was thought to be composed. It was the quintessence that they hoped by their art to capture for use as a chemical reagent or catalyst, or to convert into new forms. For, they reasoned, if the spirit present in an inferior body could be destroyed and replaced by that of one superior to it, the body of the one could be altered to be like that of the other. The "death" of copper, for instance, could be followed by a "resurrection" in the form of gold.

But since the spirits in man resembled, or were a part of, world spirit, it did not seem unreasonable to suppose that his spirits, too, might be altered or replaced by spirit finer than his own. The distillation of alcoholic spirits, called *aqua*

<sup>3</sup> "Elegie on M<sup>r</sup> Boulstred," 1.48.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Glanvill, *Some Philosophical Considerations touching the Being of Witches and Witchcraft* (London, 1667), p. 41.

<sup>5</sup> V.469-490.

<sup>6</sup> *An Apologie of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World* (Oxford, 1627), p. 39.

*vitae* (life-giving water), obviously had curative effects. This alcoholic spirit combined with spirit drawn from plants (which received their growth from stellar spirit and thus carried stellar influences) explains, probably, the early monastic production of liqueurs.<sup>7</sup> Many an eminent philosopher devoted his life to an attempt to capture the purest world spirit and infuse it into a philosopher's stone which could then be used to cure all human ills.

But music, as well as plants or stones or talismans, was thought to transmit celestial spirit and influence. On this assumption, Ficino projected what a recent scholar calls his "Music-Spirit Theory."<sup>8</sup> His belief in the efficacy of music to carry celestial influence was based on the ancient Pythagorean and Platonic theory of a musically and mathematically ordered universe, an ordering whose mathematical proportions were similar to those of heard music. This universe, according to Ficino's conception, was animated by spirit, and since the universe is fundamentally musical, its spirit must be musical. "Undoubtedly the world lives and breathes," he wrote in the *De Vita*, and its breath is music.<sup>9</sup>

It was by a "personalizing" of world spirit that Ficino, in his Commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, explained the musical sirens of the spheres and the demons that inhabit every element—an idea frequently attributed to Plato, as it was by Milton.<sup>10</sup> Since the whole body of the world lives, every one of its parts must live, and since it lives, must have soul. These spirits, which have soul, appear in heaven as Angels, in spheres as sirens, in elements as demons, through the world as genii, man's tutelary spirits. And all are musical.

<sup>7</sup> Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-121.

<sup>8</sup> D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London: Studies of the Warburg Institute, 22, 1958). I am greatly indebted to Mr. Walker for translations of Ficino and for 16th-century Italian background.

<sup>9</sup> *De Vita*, III, iii (translated by Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 13).

<sup>10</sup> Commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, translated by Sears Reynolds Jayne (Columbia, Mo., 1944), Sixth Speech, Chap. III, pp. 184-185; *Il Penseroso*, 89-96.

In *Il Penseroso*, Milton called on the "spirit of Plato to unfold" the mysteries:

. . . of these *Daemons* that are found  
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,  
Whose power hath a true consent  
With Planet, or with Element.

He wished to hear their music:

And as I wake, sweet musick breath  
Above, about, or underneath,  
Sent by som spirit to mortals good,  
Or th' unseen Genius of the Wood.

Spirits commanded by Prospero in *The Tempest* appear with "Solemn and strange music." Ariel, more spiritual than the earthy Caliban, is the more musical.

World spirit, because it is the breath of a musically proportioned universe, is musical. Conversely, music, because it images cosmic music, possesses or is spirit. The matter of song, wrote Ficino in the *De Vita*, ". . . 'is warm air, even breathing, and in a measure living, . . . so that it can be said to be, as it were, a kind of aerial and rational animal.' Musically moved air is alive, like a disembodied spirit."<sup>11</sup> "Sound is a breath," wrote the occult philosopher Agrippa. But it is not in occult philosophy alone that we find this idea. A learned music scholar, Johann Alsted, writing a hundred years later, attributed variation in the quality of musical sound to its spirit: as man was slow to anger or quick of wit from the nature of his spirits, so music was gentle or harsh according as its spirit was "tenuous and asperous":

For every Sound besides the length thereof, is also tenuous or gentle, flat, submiss, small: or sharp, harsh, clear, full, as consisting of a tenuous and asperous Spirit.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> *Templum Musicum: or the Musical Synopsis, of the Learned and Famous Johannes-Henricus-Alstedius*, translated by John Birchensha (London, 1664), p. 16. From *Elementale Mathematicum*, 1611.

Even Francis Bacon judged repercussion of sounds to be evidence of their "spiritual essence."<sup>13</sup>

The spirit of music, according to Ficino (and innumerable other writers) reflected the mood or emotion of the planet by which it was especially influenced. Each planet had the characteristics of the god whose name it bore, and sounded a music that possessed those characteristics. The music of the sun was thought to be grave and earnest, that of Venus voluptuous. Saturn, Mars, and the Moon have only voices, not music. These moods were imitated in musical modes. Because the spirit of music shares in world spirit, and because music imitates the proportions and the moods of heavenly bodies, it is uniquely efficacious, Ficino believed, in transmitting celestial spirit and stellar influence to man, whose spirits respond to it by natural sympathy. The influence of stars and planets on the physical world was rarely questioned, unless by a Cassius who exclaimed: "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars / But in ourselves, that we are underlings," or an Edmund who in *King Lear* called it the "excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeit of our own behaviour, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars." George Hakewill insisted that stars do have influence on man, though not on the will.<sup>14</sup> Moon and stars shed down that nourishment and heavenly virtue that Milton described in *Paradise Lost*, for their

. . . soft fires

Not only enlighten, but with kindly heate  
Of various influence foment and warme,  
Temper or nourish, or in part shed down  
Thir stellar vertue on all kinds that grow  
On earth, made hereby apter to receive  
Perfection from the Suns more potent Ray. (IV, 667-673)

<sup>13</sup> *Sylva Sylvarum: or a Natural History* (1627), Century II.

<sup>14</sup> *Julius Caesar*, I. ii. 140-141; *King Lear*, I. ii. 127-131; Hakewill, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

By means of this spirit, the sun was able to infuse life into dead matter, in a manner analogous to human conception, and to generate worms, flies, frogs, and even mice in dunghill or river mud. Myth had it that human conception could occur in the same way, a legend that accounts for Spenser's story of the miraculous conception of Belphoebe and Amoret from the influence of the sun's rays. This notion is the basis of Hamlet's advice to Polonius. Hamlet enters reading: "For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing carrion . . ."; whereupon he breaks off, and asks: "Have you a daughter? . . . Let her not walk i' the sun."<sup>15</sup>

By means of astrologically powerful music, then, Ficino thought it possible to transmit both stellar influence and cosmic spirit to the spirit of man, to alter his temperament, and to govern his emotions. The breath of celestial spirit could revive man's spirit. By infusion of world spirit, even material objects could be given life:

One can attract into and retain in, a material object 'something vital from the soul of the world and the souls of the spheres and stars,' that is, celestial spirit, if the object is of a material which reflects the celestial source of the spirit in question.<sup>16</sup>

For these purposes, Ficino composed and sang songs, which he called, for various reasons, "Orphic." They were intended to be like those sung by Orpheus and to possess similar powers. The words were those of the *Orphic Hymns*. The meaning of the text, it must be emphasized, was for Ficino of prime importance, for that alone, he wrote, reaches the mind. The mode fitted that of a particular planet, and attention was given to the daily position and aspect of the stars. They were delivered in the monodic style made popular later in the

<sup>15</sup> *The Faerie Queene*, III. vi. 7-8. See John E. Hankins, "Hamlet's 'god kissing carrion,'" *PMLA*, LXIV, No. 3, part I (1949), 507-516; *Hamlet*, II. ii. 181-185.

<sup>16</sup> Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

century by the proponents of the new musical style that was used in *melodrama*, now called "opera."<sup>17</sup>

This notion was not an isolated aberration of a single mind. Its origins were in the past; its influence was a powerful one throughout the 16th century and into the 17th. It explained for many the use of music for prophetic possession (a practice, still, among primitive people), for, as Sylvester translated Du Bartas:

O! what is it that *Musick* cannot doo!  
 Sith th'all-inspiring Spirit it conquers too:  
 And makes the same down from th'Empyreall Pole  
 Descend to Earth into a Prophets soule.<sup>18</sup>

It explained the origin of the emotions apparently in music that could sway man even against his will; it explained how music could elevate the soul and why it "breathed" and revealed heaven. "Musicke breathes heaven, nay more, it doth disclose it," wrote Thomas Palmer in "An Epigram" to Elway Bevin "upon his Canons of three parts in one."<sup>19</sup>

Music might, then, refine the soul to ecstasy, but according to this theory, it was usually not man who was carried to heaven, but heaven that was brought to man. It was by influx of divine spirit, not withdrawal of soul or spirit, that man was made celestial. Man need not even have an harmonious soul to be so affected. "The sullenest Creature" could be moved by it, even stones and trees: "but stone nor tree," wrote Sir Philip Sidney of Stella's singing, "by Sense's privilege, can scape from thee!" "Orpheus' voice" could breathe music "through pores of senseless trees, as it could make them move." Amphion gave life to stones which "good measure daunst the *Thebane* walls to builde."<sup>20</sup> Man himself could

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-24.

<sup>18</sup> *Du Bartas, his Divine Weekes and Works* (London, 1621), p. 302.

<sup>19</sup> *A Briefe and Short Instruction of the Art of Musicke* (London, 1631), prefatory verses.

<sup>20</sup> "Astrophel and Stella," sonnet XXXVI, in Albert Feuillerat, ed., *The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney* (Cambridge, 1912), Vol. II, p. 257; *Ibid.*, "Other Sonnets of Variable Verse," third sonnet, ed. cit., p. 288.

be restored to life by music. Why should not the breath of world spirit carried by music give life, since the dust of the earth became man when into it God ". . . breath'd / The Breath of Life"?

Authority for this use of music to infuse prophetic spirit, or to give life where none was before, was to be found in the writings of early neoplatonists, such as Proclus and Iamblichus. However, Mr. D. P. Walker believes that Ficino's chief sources were Plotinus and the Hermetic *Asclepius*, a work Ficino had translated. It was in the *Asclepius* that he found an account of the alchemical infusion of soul into matter: "Our first ancestors invented the art of making gods." Having made a statue or an image, "they evoked the souls of demons or angels, and put them into images with holy and divine rites." This they did by means of ". . . herbs, stones and aromas, which have in them a natural divine power"; and by means of "hymns and praises and sweet sounds concerted like the harmony of the heavens," they retained these spirits. This passage Ficino considered the source of an idea in the *Enneads* of Plotinus (IV, iii, 113), which he interpreted to mean that by music ". . . one can attract into, and retain in, a material object 'something vital from the soul of the world and the souls of the spheres and stars.'"<sup>21</sup>

Ficino avoided the idolatry inherent in Hermes' statement. Demons and genii, like angels, were world spirits, but they were personalized world spirits, and because they were personalized, they were thought to have soul. Ficino was firm in his insistence that talismans, odors, music, and the like infuse only impersonal world spirit, which has no soul, and that they affect not the soul of man but his spirits. He disclaimed any use of "demonic magic"—the "black magic" condemned by the Church because there was always the danger that bad demons as well as good might be invoked. The air was thought to be full of spirits which could course

<sup>21</sup> Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

through the spirits of man. The eminent physician, Levinus Lemnius, referred to these ". . . externall spirites recoursing into his [man's] bodye and mynde," the good angels imparting a "pleasant sweet inspiration," the bad angels breathing out "a pestiferous poyson." The Devil, wrote Alsted, uses filthy music ". . . as his Vehicle, by which he slideth himself into the minds of men."<sup>22</sup> Ficino had no intention of encouraging possession by demons and angels. It was "natural magic," not demonic, that he hoped to employ. Music was used, according to tradition, to drive *out* evil spirits, but that is another story. Giovanni Pico agreed with Ficino in postulating a world spirit that could be controlled by natural magic and by use of which man could be made celestial. He wrote (in a passage quoted by Henry Reynolds in his *Mythomystes* in 1633):

In natural magic nothing is more efficacious than the Hymns of Orpheus, if there be applied to them the suitable music, the disposition of the soul, and the other circumstances known to the wise.<sup>23</sup>

But he put more faith in the magic of number, which had a virtue apart from music. According to his disciple, Reynolds, the power of Orpheus lay in his knowledge of the mystical doctrine of numbers. Seven, four, and three had cosmic significance and magical effect, a superstition from which we are not yet free when we refuse to "light three on a match" or when we look for a four-leaved clover.

Ficino's ideas of world spirit and his use of music were accepted, however, by a procession of 16th-century neoplatonists, many of whom were less cautious about magical infusion of demons and angels than he was, or who combined with them Pico's theories of numerology. Ludovico Lazarelli (according to his *Crater Hermetis*, published in

<sup>22</sup> Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions . . . Englished by T. Newton* (London, 1576), fols. 22<sup>v</sup>-24<sup>v</sup>. First ed. 1561. Alsted, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Conclusiones Orphicae*, in Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

1505) not only hoped to call down demons in the tradition of the *Asclepius*, but to make them. Sounds themselves became demons: Ficino's warm and living air took shape, and these demons were conceived of, in all probability, writes Mr. Walker, as ". . . separate bits of the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Christ."<sup>24</sup> One recalls Sir John Davies' description in his *Orchestra* (st. 21) of the mythical musician, Amphion, who by his music "begot" of the air not a demon but a siren: "As when Amphion with his charming lyre, / Begot so sweet a siren of the air."

Ficino's ideas were repeated—with some variation—in the *Occult Philosophy* of Cornelius Agrippa. The universe is pervaded by spirit, wrote Agrippa, the same in the universe as in man, which carries to man the influences of the stars:

For this is the band, and continuity of nature, that all superior vertue doth flow through every inferiour with a long, and continued series, dispersing its rayes even to the very last things; . . . as a certain string stretched out, to the lowermost things of all, of which string if one end be touched, the whole doth presently shake, and such a touch doth sound to the other end. . . .

This spirit, which is warm and generative, the source of all life, may be infused by music, for "Musical harmony is not destitute of the gifts of the Stars":

. . . there is in Sounds a vertue to receive the heavenly gifts. It is a most powerful imaginer of all things, which whilst it follows opportunely the Celestial bodies, doth wonderfully allure the Celestial influence.

In a section *Concerning the agreement of them [voices] with the celestial bodies, and what harmony and sound is correspondent of every star*, he attributed to each planet a particular musical tone and mood and quality of sound. Music can thus alter dispositions of bodies and souls, and music,

<sup>24</sup> Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.

he wrote, is not used in vain to restore the mind "to wholesome manners untill they make a man suitable to the Celestial Harmony and make him wholly Celestial."<sup>25</sup>

In the works of Pomponazzi, of Francesco Giorgi, and many other writers, theories for the magical power of music recur, as Mr. Walker points out. As late as 1589 the theme of neoplatonic magic was given prominence by Fabio Paolini, a professor of Greek at Venice, in his *Hebdomades*, in which he referred again to the *Asclepius* statues' being animated by "herbs, stones and celestial music." He regretted that the church frowned on such notions, but he clung to them nevertheless. He quoted Ficino's rules for composing planetary music in imitation of the Orphic Hymns, which contain "divine Mysteries." A discussion of the power of Orpheus' music to inspire life became a violent issue during a series of lectures given by Paolini in the *Accademia degli Uranici* (of which Tasso was a member), the seriousness of which it is difficult for a modern reader to imagine. As influential a philosopher as Campanella believed that music, among other things, could be used for "breathing in the Spirit of the World."<sup>26</sup>

## II

These ideas appear in England in two different types of writings—in the occult works, especially those associated with Rosicrucianism, which drew heavily on Agrippa and described the alchemical power of music to refine the soul, and also in less metaphysical, more popular poetry, which was more indebted to the *Asclepius* and to Ficino for the notion that music could infuse life.

Various occult philosophers emphasized numbers, which may be found in music but whose magical powers are inde-

<sup>25</sup> *Three Books of Occult Philosophy written by Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, translated out of the Latin into the English Tongue*, by J. F. (London, 1651), Book II, Chap. XXIV, pp. 255, 259, and 278. Written by 1510; first published in 1531.

<sup>26</sup> Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-138, 233.

pendent of it, more than their musical vehicle. However, in 1624, in a summary of Agrippa's analysis both of world spirit and music, it was to musical proportion, among all the manifestations of number, that William Ingpen granted the greatest power to attract celestial influence. Having pointed out the Orphical significance of number, without which man cannot learn the secrets of the "Holy Ghost" (which is certainly spirit), he repeated Agrippa's enthusiastic account of the power of music: "Musicall harmony" has such "power and vertues"

. . . that she is called the Imatatrix of the starres, of the soule and body of man. And when she followeth celestiall bodies so exquisitely, it is incredible to think how she provoketh those heavenly influxes. . . .<sup>27</sup>

A deluge of occult writing followed the translation of Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy* in 1651, inspired presumably by resistance to the new science, which was, in many minds, eliminating God from the universe by breaking "the causal chain of descent from God to matter." Many of these writers stressed the magical power of number, but in the work of the astrologer-attorney, John Heydon, we again meet belief in the efficacy of music to provoke celestial soul and genii. World spirit, he related, in the words of Agrippa, is the same in the world as in man. But he departed from his source to explain that this spirit is the medium of genii, which can, by lights and music, be brought down from the spheres. Through lights and sounds "consenting most sweetly in music," he wrote, music sends

. . . down soules as merily to the *Moon*, and from thence they come down sadly to the belly and Matrix of the Earth in prolific spirited *Winds* and *Waters*, and be effectual in the operations of Nature.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *The Secrets of Numbers: According to Theologicall, Arithmeticall, Geometricall and Harmonicall Computations* (London, 1624), p. 94.

<sup>28</sup> *The Harmony of the World, being a Discourse of God, Heaven, Angels, Stars, Planets, Earth; the Miraculous Descensions and Ascentions of Spirits . . .* (London, 1662), pp. 75-77.

It is not proportion, he said, that gives music its force, but the "Idea" or the "Genius approaching to the Instruments of sense and carried inward" where it works upon the body.

Current alchemical books also suggest the use of music to aid in control of the alchemist's quintessence or to attract astral influence. From ancient times metals were associated with planets, from which they derived their planetary signs, but they were associated, too, with planetary music, as they were in Robert Fludd's famous diagram of the universal monochord, where each sign is paralleled by a note of the scale.<sup>29</sup> Their combination was thought to be like that of musical notes ("accords which in Musick be, . . . Much like proportions be in Alkymy");<sup>30</sup> it was numerically the same, and metals were referred to often as the "chymic choir," and personified, each holding a musical instrument.<sup>31</sup> A picture of the alchemist's laboratory in a work by Heinrich Khunrath, published in 1595 and again posthumously in 1609,<sup>32</sup> shows, along with the stills and retorts, a number of musical instruments—lutes, viol, and harp. Michael Maier, in his *Atalanta Fugiens* (1618), appended three-part canons to be used, presumably, in the artist's work.<sup>33</sup> We can only guess that metals responded to musical instruments "by sympathy," that law of nature which guaranteed response of like to like, or, judging from Maier's three-part canon (symbolic of the Trinity), in response to the magic of number.

But metals also had spirit and it is not far-fetched to guess, too, that music aided in the conveyance or control of world spirit, the alchemical quintessence. Elias Ashmole, in his

<sup>29</sup> *Utriusque cosmi . . . historia* (1617), tract 1, lib. III, p. 90.

<sup>30</sup> John Norton, *The ordinall of alchemy* (1477), printed in Elias Ashmole, *Theatrum chemicum Britannicum* (London, 1652).

<sup>31</sup> As in Johann Daniel Mylius, *Philosophia Reformata* (Frankfurt, 1622), or in a collection of tracts, the *Musaeum Hermeticum* (Frankfurt, 1625), etc.

<sup>32</sup> *Amphitheatrum sapientiae aeternae* (1609). Plate reproduced by Taylor, *op. cit.*, opposite p. 150.

<sup>33</sup> See John Read, *Through Alchemy to Chemistry* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1957), pp. 64ff.

*Theatrum chemicum Britannicum* (1652), suggests as much, for the frontispiece pictures planetary figures, alchemical vessels, and musical instruments beneath which appears an inscription suggesting their relationship to the *anima mundi*: "These Hieroglyphics vaile the Vigorous Beames / Of an unbounded Soule." And in the text he wrote of how things "*Artificially made*" may communicate "*Celestiall Influences*" from "*the Soule of the World*":

We are to Consider, that the *Soule of the World* is not confined, nor the *Celestiall Influences* limited, but doe indifferently emit and communicate their *Vertues* alike, as well to things *Artificially made*, as to those that are *Naturally generated*.<sup>34</sup>

The whole idea of alchemy was an obsession with 17th-century writers, who applied its principles or terminology to almost every philosophy. The neoplatonic lover imagined himself sublimed by "Love's Alchymie": "For I am every dead thing, / In whom love wrought new Alchimie," wrote Donne.<sup>35</sup> It is obvious in the mystical philosophy of Jacob Boehme, who—like many a "Spiritual Alchemist"—saw Christ as the true philosopher's stone who could transmute ". . . the natural to the supernatural, operating the 'New Birth.'"<sup>36</sup> Catholic writers, especially, pictured man's heart as an alembic in which spirit was refined by the fire of God's love.

In "An Elegie," Francis Quarles described music's breathing in of celestial love, which refined man's "ravisht braynes" and made him "ripe for heav'n":

Musick, the language of th'eternall Quire,  
Breath'd in his soule celestiall straynes,  
And fild his Spirits with Seraphick fyre,  
Whose gentle flames calcin'd his ravisht braynes;  
And made him ripe for heav'n.

<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 464.

<sup>35</sup> "A Nocturnall upon S. Lucies day," 11.12-13.

<sup>36</sup> Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, Chap. VI, sec. III, (New York: Meridian Books, 1955), pp. 143-144.

Edward Benlowes, in "A Poetic Descant upon a Private Musick-meeting," described each instrument as a planet, possessing the same powers to move emotions or project influence:

Last Mercury with ravishing strains fell on,  
Whose violin seem'd the chymic-stone,  
For every melting touch was pure projection.

The sweetness of music could inspire possession by a god:

Form, Beauty, Sweetness, all did here conspire,  
Combin'd in one Celestial Quire,  
To charm the enthusiastic soul with enthean fire.

This occultism was limited to a comparatively small group of writers, whose ideas had long been under attack. Early in the century Ben Jonson made them the butt of humor in his *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon*, with remarks aimed both at Cornelius Agrippa—"Cornelius Drible," as he is called—and the Rosicrucians. "What is the language in the moon?" Jonson asks. He answers, "They have no articulate voyces there, but certain motions to musicke: all discourse there is harmonie." "A fine Lunatique language i'faith; how doe their Lawyers then?" "They are Pythagorians, all dumbe as fishes." And the account continues: "The brethren of the *Rosi-Crosse* have their Colledge within a mile o' the Moone." In *Mercurie Vindicated from the Alchemists at Court* he has his fun, too, with the alchemists, who use music to charm new life into old bodies. A grave matron, they think, may be transformed into a young virgin; an old courtier, broiled in the coals, is given life again by the blowing in of spirit:

They will calcine you a grave matron . . . and spring up a yong virgin, out of her ashes, as fresh as a *Phoenix*; Lay you an old Courtier o' the coales like a sausedge, or a bloat-herring, and after they ha' broil'd him enough, blow a soule into him with a paire of bellowes. . . .

Whereupon Vulcan, entering "with a troupe of threedbare Alchymists" who dance around Mercury, speaks: "Begin your charme, sound musique, circle him in, and take him." In 1656, Abraham Cowley, in a note to the first book of his *Davideis*, attacked the "Platoniques" who "fly to their Anima Mundi" to explain musical effects, an idea, among others, ". . . so false, that I wonder at the negligence or impudence of the Relators."

But while these notions were attacked in their practice, they flourished unchallenged in a large body of poetry. That music could breathe soul into whatever was inanimate, even as Orpheus had proved, was the basis for much poetic imagery less dominated by metaphysical notions than that of Quarles and Benlowes. The most direct debt to the *Asklepius* of Hermes is probably that of Thomas Carew in his poem *Celia singing*. Celia's music is as powerful as that of Orpheus to soothe wild beasts, as powerful as that of our "ancient ancestors" to breathe life into idols, which become idolators of this "choyce music":

*Harke how my Celia, with the choyce  
Musique of her hand and voyce  
Stills the loude wind; and makes the wilde  
Incensed Bore, and Panther milde!  
Marke how those statues like men move,  
Whilst men with wonder statues prove!  
This stiffe rock bends to worship her,  
That Idoll turnes Idolater.*

The image is a favorite with Chapman, in whose writing the Ficinian influence has often been noted. With its planetary sound, music infused the "virtue" of life into stones, trees, and flowers:

. . . notes infuse with your most Cynthian noyse,  
To all the Trees, sweet flowers, and christall Flotes,  
That crowne, and make this cheerful Garden quick,  
Vertue, that every tuch may make such Musick.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> "Ovids Banquet of Sense," in Phyllis B. Bartlett, ed., *The Poems of George Chapman* (New York, 1941), stanza 19, p. 58.

People, too, were brought to life by music. "Here is an instrument," says Amorphus satirically in Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*, "that alone is able to infuse soul into the most melancholique and dull-disposed creature upon earth."<sup>38</sup> By aid of the magic of music, Hermione, in *The Winter's Tale*, who seemed turned to a statue, is given life, as were the statues in the *Asklepius*: "Music, awake her; strike! / 'Tis time; descend; be stone no more." And there follows the oft-made apology for the use of magic: "If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating." Thaisa, wife of Pericles, is brought to life, too, by the aid of music: "Death may usurp on nature many hours," says Cerimon, "And yet the fire of life kindle again / The o'erpress'd spirits." Then, calling for both fire and music, he commands:

The rough and woeful music that we have,  
Cause it to sound, beseech you.  
The viol once more; . . .  
The music there! I pray you, give her air.  
Gentlemen,  
This queen will live.<sup>39</sup>

Milton, too, knew his Hermetic philosophy. One of his imagined joys of solitude in *Il Penseroso* was that of watching starry constellations with "thrice great *Hermes*." The Lady in *Comus*, "In stony fetters fixt," was restored to life by the song of the river spirit, Sabrina. The attendant Spirit (made visible for his task) heard: "At last a soft and solemn breathing sound" (for music is alive and breathing, wrote Ficino) that "Rose like a steam of rich distill'd Perfumes":

I was all eare,  
And took in strains that might create a soul  
Under the ribs of Death.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> IV. iii. 236-238, ed. cit., IV, p. 12.

<sup>39</sup> *The Winter's Tale*, V. iii. 98-111; *Pericles*, III. ii. 82-93.

<sup>40</sup> Ll. 819ff., 555-562.

But the most imaginative piece of poetry based entirely on this conception of sphere-born influence, which can refine the soul, reveal heaven, and give life to the dead, is Milton's *At a Solemn Musick*. This "solemn" music resembles the "soft and solemn" sounds of *Comus*. It is the "solemn music" that Prospero called for in *The Tempest* to evoke spirits and to restore sense to the captive nobles whom he had bewitched. This solemn music, too—music and poetry, born of the spheres—breathes sense into the soul of the listener, in Orphic tradition:

Blest pair of *Sirens*, pledges of Heav'n's joy,  
Sphear-born harmonious Sisters, Voice, and Vers,  
Wed your divine sounds, and mixt power employ  
Dead things with inbreath'd sense able to pierce.

"Voice and Vers" carry not only the spirit of life; they also present to the phantasy an image of the regions from which they came, a celestial heaven which is musical:

And to our high-rais'd phantasie present,  
That undisturbed Song of pure concet,  
Ay sung before the saphire-colour'd throne  
To him that sits theron  
With Saintly shout, and solemn Jubily.

The final accomplishment of music is to make the nature of man celestial, to restore man to original purity, to make him one with celestial music:

That we on Earth with undiscording voice  
May rightly answer that melodious noise;  
As once we did.

Milton is more subtle than the occultists, for he enriched Hermetic notions with more intellectual ideas. But the concept is the same: music, "the Imatatrix of the starres," breathes in life, provokes "heavenly influxes," and makes man "wholly Celestial."

John Donne lamented that the world had wept out its "vitall spirits," that its binding "Cyment" was "resolv'd," its "Magnetique force" gone; and with the life-giving Spirit lost, the world must now decay:

What artist now dares boast that he can bring  
Heaven hither, or constellate any thing,  
So as the influence of those starres may bee  
Imprison'd in an Hearbe, or Charme, or Tree,  
And doe by touch, all that those stars could doe?  
The art is lost, and correspondence too.  
For Heaven gives little, and the earth takes lesse,  
And man least knowes their trade and purposes.<sup>41</sup>

Yet the idea persisted, both in occult writing and in metaphor, that music could convey divine spirit, that it could breathe life into stocks and stones. And surely, at the final judgment, the trumpet's "sounding Alchymie" would wake the dead.

### III

The life, soul, spirit, living warmth of music was believed by the occult philosophers to derive from world soul and spirit. But it was, by many, attributed not to cosmic spirit but to the spirits of the singer, spirits which, while they might be like cosmic spirits, carried personal as well as universal qualities. As John of Salisbury had written long before: "Music is . . . a type of conveyance of spirit—now human, now divine, and again prophetic."<sup>42</sup>

There have been many attempts through the ages to explain the response of one person to another. Queries about how man achieves contact with other people, and why he responds to their feelings, gestures, words—any kind of vocal utterance—posed a problem to which the Renaissance philos-

<sup>41</sup> "The first Anniversary," 11.149, 221, 249, 291-398.

<sup>42</sup> *Policraticus*, Book I, Chap. 6, translated by Joseph B. Pike (Minneapolis, 1938), p. 30.

opher, as well as later 17th-century scientists, or as we do today, devoted endless thought. "Why are our teeth set on edge when we see another person eat something sour or bitter?" it was often asked. Why are we moved by an actor to feel whatever emotion he portrays? How must we account for the contact between singer and listener, for the effects of singing that do not seem to derive solely from harmony itself, or even from words?

One answer, at least, was that there is a material contact by means of soul and spirit carried in the breath. Aristotle suggested this implication in his *de Anima*. Sound itself, he wrote, is characterized by motion of the air, ". . . which is continuous from the impinging body up to the organ of hearing. The organ of hearing is physically united with air." Voice, on the other hand, ". . . is a kind of sound characteristic of what has soul in it. 'Voice' is the impact of the in-breathed air against the 'windpipe', and the agent that produces the impact is the soul resident in these parts of the body . . . what produces the impact must have soul in it and must be accompanied by an act of imagination, for voice is a sound with a meaning."<sup>43</sup>

In this context, if song is ". . . warm air, even breathing, and in a measure living," it is so by virtue of the breath and spirit and soul of the singer. In Ficino's words, again, in his Commentary on the *Timaeus*, musical sounds convey ". . . as if animated, the emotions and thoughts of the singer's soul . . . to the listeners' souls."<sup>44</sup> The way in which voice, which is both air and soul, affects the listener was described in the same passage as being achieved by "an almost material affinity." By motion of the air it moves the spirits; by emotion it affects both senses and soul; by meaning it works on the mind. In another passage, he described the contact in a similar way:

<sup>43</sup> 420-420<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

Since song and sound come from the thought of the mind, from the impulse of the imagination, and from the passion of the heart and, together with the broken and formed air, move the air-like spirit of the listener, which is the bond of Soul and body, it easily moves the imagination, affects the heart, and penetrates the innermost sanctuary of the mind.<sup>45</sup>

As the modern romanticists like to say of music: "It comes from the heart, may it go to the heart."

Agrippa made a point of prefacing his repetition of this quotation of Ficino with the reminder that ". . . we shall not deny, that there is in Sounds a vertue to receive the heavenly gifts," but with this tribute he went on to say that vocal sound is better than that of instrument because, as Ficino had said, it achieves direct contact of mind, imagination, and heart of singer and listener. He described voice in Aristotelian terms, but he added the popular notion that with the voice, which is breath, there is an issue of spirits:

Sound is a breath; voyce is a sound and animate breath; Speech is a breath pronounced with sound, and a voyce signifying something; the spirit of which proceedeth out of the mouth with sound and voyce. *Chaludius* saith that a voyce is sent forth out of the inward cavity of the breast and heart, by the assistance of the spirit.<sup>46</sup>

This emphasis on emission of breath and spirit in singing or in speaking was an ancient idea and one that was probably taken for granted, just as it was taken for granted that spirits issued from the eye to carry contagion or to cause love. This spirit had explained for generations the ". . . straunge matters . . . brought to passe by the woordes and workes of man." Words are generated within, wrote Roger Bacon, ". . . by the thoughts of the Soule." They are emitted by ". . . open wayes, through which is a great passage of Spirits, heate, evaporation, virtue . . . which may bee made by the Soule and heart."

<sup>45</sup> *Opera Omnia* (Basileae, 1576), p. 651. The translation is that of Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* (New York, 1943), p. 307.

<sup>46</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 257-258.

These spirits and virtues infect whoever is near; they

... sometimes hurt us, when they proceede from a crazie body, that is of an evill complexion: and againe they greatly profite and comfort us, when they come from a pure and sound bodie of a good complexion.<sup>47</sup>

Francis Bacon considered it not improbable "... that there should be some transmission and operations from spirit to spirit without the mediation of the senses."<sup>48</sup> By emotion-carrying spirit emitted in speech, Lady Macbeth hoped to inspire courage in the heart of her timorous Lord:

Hie thee hither  
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,  
And chastise with the valour of my tongue  
All that impedes thee from the golden round,  
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem  
To have thee crown'd withal.

Milton's Satan planned to "taint / Th'animal Spirits" of Eve by "inspiring venom."<sup>49</sup>

The contagion of the singer's breath (for tunes *could* be contagious) was the subject of foolery in Ben Jonson's *Poetaster* when Albius exclaims after Crispinus' song: "O, most odoriferous musicke!" In this opinion, Tucca joins: "A, ha! stinkard! Another Orpheus, you slave, another Orpheus! An Arion, riding on the backe of a dolphin, rascall!"<sup>50</sup> The song of the Clown in *Twelfth Night* meets a similar reception from Sir Andrew and Sir Toby:

Sir And. A mellifluous voice, as I am a true knight.  
Sir To. A contagious breath.  
Sir And. Very sweet and contagious, i'faith.  
Sir To. To hear by the nose, it is dulcet in contagion.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *The Mirror of Alchimy, composed by the thrice-famous and learned Fryer, Roger Bachon, . . . and also a most excellent discourse of the admirable force and efficacie of Art and Nature . . .* (London, 1597), p. 62.

<sup>48</sup> *Advancement of Learning*, Book II, Everyman ed., p. 119.

<sup>49</sup> *Macbeth*, I. v. 26-31; *Paradise Lost*, IV, 814-5.

<sup>50</sup> *Poetaster*, IV. iii. 79-82.

<sup>51</sup> *Twelfth Night*, II. iii. 54-58.

But singing did not only carry contagion; it gave life: "When to her Lute Corinna sings, / Her voice enlivens the Leaden strings."<sup>52</sup> And this life came from the singer. Chapman described Julia's "sweete tunes" as warm and living children of the brain, conceived in her "mentall wombe" by mind and imagination in the Ficinian tradition, sent out with kisses—and like kisses—on her voice:

Sweete tunes, brave issue, that from *Julia* come;  
Shooke from her braine, armed like the Queene of Ire;  
For first conceived in her mentall wombe,  
And nourisht with her soules discursive fire,  
They grew into the power of her thought;  
She gave them dounye plumes from her attire,  
And them to strong imagination brought:  
That, to her voice; wherein most movinglye  
Shee (blessing them with kysses) letts them flye.<sup>53</sup>

Crashaw likened the nightingale's notes to fledglings born in "the sugred Nest / Of her delicious soule," which finally "forsake their nest" to flutter on the air. And with the pouring out of this creation, the soul itself is ravished and "pour'd / Into loose ecstasies."<sup>54</sup> Lord Herbert of Cherbury imagined the words of a singer given life by her breath; the soul then tuned the words into a harmony that is dismissed into the air as "living, moving and harmonious noise."<sup>55</sup>

This life given to music by the singer was passed on, in turn, to the listener. In William Cartwright's verses, "A young Lord" speaking "to his Mistris, who had taught him a Song," exclaims: "Henceforth I'l think my Breath is due / No more to Nature but to you."<sup>56</sup> These living tunes "tryed"

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Campion, *A Booke of Ayres* (1601), no. VI; Percival Vivian, ed., *Campion's Works*, (Oxford, 1909), p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> "Ovids Banquet of Sense," Stanza 23, ed. cit., p. 59.

<sup>54</sup> "Musick's Duell," 11.66-67, 90-91, 101-103, in L. C. Martin, ed., *The Poems of Richard Crashaw* (Oxford, 1927), pp. 150-153.

<sup>55</sup> "To a lady who did sing excellently," in G. C. Moore Smith, ed., *The Poems of Edward Lord Herbert of Cherbury* (Oxford, 1923), pp. 44-45.

<sup>56</sup> G. Blakemore Evans, ed., *The Plays and Poems* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1951), p. 462.

by alchemy "to ayre," clothed in "rich breath," flew like bees (in Chapman's *Banquet of Sence*) to "make love" with the soul of the listener, "possessing" by means of the soul they carried and giving new life:

Rise then in swarms, and sting me thus to death  
Or turne me into swounde; possesse me whole,  
Soule of my life, and essence of my soule.

They "flye rejoysing, but . . . in giving others life themselves do dye." By her voice Chapman's Corinna hoped to infuse life even into inanimate statues when she wooed the gods to add their power to hers to

. . . try if with her voyces vitall sounde  
She could warme life through those cold statues spread  
And cheere the Dame that wept when she was dead.<sup>57</sup>

#### IV

It was not possible, however, to separate the human spirit from the divine completely, for the notion that world spirit was shared by man had wide acceptance, as we have seen. This association the love poet, especially, could not ignore. The neoplatonic lover, like all lovers of earlier centuries who made a cult of worshiping woman, heard not mere woman singing, but the angels themselves. Human spirit was imagined to be a part of cosmic spirit. In the poetry of Lapo Gianni or of Cavalcanti, in the 13th century, ". . . the bodily spirits corresponded to the spirits which moved the cosmic organism, the angelic substances in the sky." The lady was of the ". . . species of the heavenly spirits . . . She was a link with heaven, and her influence was of cosmic significance." In the past, and in orthodox Renaissance neoplatonism, this spirit was seen as the light of beauty that shone preeminently through the eye. It ". . . shone in the corporeal world in the appearance of a woman, sending out of the windows of her

<sup>57</sup> Stanzas, 11, 18, 24, 27, ed. cit., pp. 56-60.

soul rays of high potency with which to move the hearts of men."<sup>58</sup> But it was imagined, too, in the 17th century, that these divine spirits could issue with the voice, that they were distinguished by musicalness rather than by brightness, for world spirit is all musical. "Heare you this soule-invading voice, & count it but a voice?" asked Sir Philip Sidney. "'Tis the very essence of their tunes when Angels do rejoice."<sup>59</sup> So Milton wrote of "Leonora Singing in Rome": ". . . the music of your voice itself bespeaks the presence of God. Either God or some third mind from the untenanted skies is moving mysteriously in your throat." This spirit that gave life to sound and that was thereby infused into the listener was, in the exaggerated hyperbole of love poetry, not only human but divine.

But where spirit was divine, so was its harmony, which imaged the divine and possessed the power, so often attributed to it in the Renaissance, not only of infusing life but of drawing soul from body as in an ecstasy. Hence singing had two-fold value: harmony drew out the soul; the spirit that it carried restored life. Its effects thus paralleled those of kissing as neoplatonic lovers described it, for a kiss, too, gave both life and death as soul left one body to enter that of another.

Thomas Stanley, in two poems written to "Celia Singing," described how harmony drew out the soul, and how Celia's inspiring angel breathed in another to make of her a sphere. Thus even plants and stones are given life, and thus is achieved the erotic life and death experienced by the lover:

But if the Angel, which inspires  
This subtle frame with active fires,  
Should mould this breath to words, and those  
Into a harmony dispose,  
The music of this heavenly sphere  
Would steal each soul out at the ear,

<sup>58</sup> Maurice Valency, *In Praise of Love* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), p. 233.  
<sup>59</sup> "Other Sonnets of Variable Verse," the seventh sonnet, ed. cit., II, p. 294.

And into plants and stones infuse  
 A life that Cherubins would choose;  
 And with new powers invert the laws of Fate,  
 Kill those that live, and dead things animate.

In the companion verses (in French), he described again the drawing out of soul by the charm of harmony in a kind of death, and the re-animation by breath, "subtile and warm," which slides through the ear to the heart to infuse a new soul of harmony: "Que la vie m'est douce, la mort m'est sans peine, / Puisque'on les trouve toutes deux dans ton haleine."<sup>60</sup>

To the song of "Cynthia, singing a Recitative Piece of Music," Philip Ayers attributed the power to move emotion, and he continued with the image of a body, dead through the power of harmony, re-animated by the "angelic spirit," identified with the Sirens of the spheres. "O thou angelic spirit," he began, "Sweet Syren,"

Thou canst heat, cool, grieve us, or make us smile  
 Nay stab or kill, yet hurt us not the while . . .  
 List'ning to thee, our bodies seem as dead,  
 For our rapt souls then up to Heav'n are fled.  
 So great a Monarch art thou, that thy breath  
 Has power to give us either Life, or Death.<sup>61</sup>

Thus was explained the power of Orpheus, who breathed life into stones and trees and brought his "half-regained Eurydice" from Pluto's doors. Either because he could command spiritual demons or because he knew all the secrets of numbers whereby stellar spirits could be invoked, or because music itself—or his voice—breathed spirit, he was able to ". . . attract into and retain in, a material object 'something vital from the soul of the world and the soul of the spheres and stars.' " So man's music could bring statues back to life. So the amorous lover lost and won his soul again through his lady's singing. Music was the breath of life.

<sup>60</sup> George Saintsbury, ed., *Minor Poets of the Caroline Period* (Oxford, 1905), III, p. 117.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 281-282.

## THREE THOUSAND YEARS OF BIBLE STUDY<sup>1</sup>

*E. A. Speiser*

### I

THE TITLE OF MY TOPIC, "Three Thousand Years of Bible Study," could well raise some eyebrows at the outset. Is this figure to be taken seriously? Granted that the term "Bible" in this instance must refer to the Old Testament; but doesn't modern scholarship maintain that even the Pentateuch, or Torah, the oldest of the major divisions of the Hebrew Bible, did not begin to appear in writing until about 900 B.C.? How, then, can one speak of three millennia of Bible study when thirty centuries ago there was as yet no written Bible? My next topic—the time involved in writing the Old Testament—will answer this question in part, but a complete answer requires first a brief discussion of the central theme of the Old Testament.

Both tradition and modern criticism agree that the actual writing of the Bible required many centuries and many authors. The question as to whether or not Moses wrote the Pentateuch does not affect the overall picture. On internal grounds, we have to allow almost exactly a thousand years between the oldest datable composition, the Song of Deborah (*Judges* 5), and the latest, the Book of Daniel. Tradition would date both the beginning and the end slightly earlier, but the total stays about the same. Some parts of the Bible

<sup>1</sup> This paper was read originally at the Wayne State University Conference on Bible Studies held in May, 1959. It is here printed exactly as prepared for oral presentation, except that a few footnotes have been appended for minimal reference.

are unquestionably earlier than the Song of Deborah, but they cannot be dated with reasonable accuracy.

Yet for all this great spread in time and the number of writers involved, the Bible shows a consistent underlying unity, a unity that stems from a single, central theme. That theme is essentially history.<sup>2</sup> But it is not ordinary and routine history—not primarily an account of noteworthy events as such, the story of outstanding individuals, or even the record of a particular nation. Rather, it is the history of a society embarked on a specific quest, the quest for a way of life, a way possessing universal validity. Everything else is subordinated to that one main theme. It is this collective ideal and the account of its millennial pursuit that jointly make of the Bible a unique experience of mankind. Because the experience proved to be positive, and its effect on all subsequent history enduring and widespread, the record in which it was distilled—that is, the Old Testament in the first instance—has been the subject of more sustained study than any other written work.

Bible research, then, is basically the study of a running account of a very long process. The record owes its appeal and continuous cultivation to the significance of the process in which interest in its witness, or testament, was never to slacken. Moreover, the Bible came to command attention not only from its committed disciples, but also from students of man's ways in general. Every aspect of the text and context has been subjected to the most intensive kind of scrutiny. Today this study is being carried on in more varied forms and on a broader scale than ever before.

Now, if research into the written account of the biblical experience can really be traced back some three thousand years, anyone who expects to survey such a long span in a

<sup>2</sup> The writer had the opportunity to develop this theme in a paper on "The Biblical Idea of History in its Common Near Eastern Setting," *Israel Exploration Journal*, Vol. 7 (1957), pp. 201-16.

half-hour article can allot less than a minute to each century, for it is safe to say that there has been no lull in Bible study ever since its inception. I have already used up a few minutes on this introduction. Happily, most of the detail has been treated extensively in the past, and the results are well-known and readily available. I am free, therefore, to disregard the familiar—except for a few comments in the interests of continuity—and concentrate instead on what is less likely to be a matter of common knowledge. I refer to the two end points in the long chain of biblical research, the period at the very beginning, and the one in which we ourselves are participants.

We must not suppose, as many still do, that there was no Bible study, no analytical approach to the unfolding work, until the record was complete and the books were closed. The evidence against such a view is both abundant and conclusive. To begin with, the compilers of the Old Testament regarded its writings as sacred scriptures; this meant that the compilers had to analyze materials carefully to determine what to include in the final record, or canon, and what to leave out. A decision had to be made, in other words, as to what was canonical and what was not. The debates on the subject—and we are lucky enough to have fairly full minutes of them<sup>3</sup>—make fascinating reading to this day. Books that failed to make the grade, but enjoyed sectarian following and approval, make up the large body of Apocrypha; and material from the Dead Sea caves has shown very recently how apt the label “apocrypha” really is. Many other books—some of those “books without end” to which Ecclesiastes refers<sup>4</sup>—fell short even of such semi-respectable acceptance. In any event, each decision called for delicate balancing, and hence for prior study.

There is, besides, massive evidence of Bible study long before the conclusion of the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures

<sup>3</sup> Still useful on this subject is H. E. Ryle, *The Canon of the Old Testament*, second edition (London, 1895).

<sup>4</sup> Ecclesiastes 12:12.

was determined. As early as the 3rd century B.C., Greek translations of Old Testament books began to appear. Anybody who has worked on translations in general, and Bible translations in particular, can attest with feeling how much toil and trouble, digging and checking, dissatisfaction and doubt—in short, how much study and research—such work entails. The Septuagint, in common with many translations that were to follow, is among other things a product of dedicated scholarship. It is also direct proof that the original was viewed as a precious testament of vital import to future generations and to other cultures.

But the 3rd century B.C. is nowhere near the beginning of Old Testament study. The conviction that certain writings could and did contain a divinely inspired design for living is attested a good deal earlier. The Hebrew term for such teachings is *torah*. The usual translation of this word as "law" is unfortunate, in that it emphasizes legalism at the expense of the spiritual. For that matter, Hebrew tradition itself failed to give due heed to the full range of the term *torah*; and this failure is the basis of the dogma that Moses himself wrote all but the last twelve verses of the Pentateuch. The Bible itself states on several occasions that Moses wrote down a series, or a book, of certain teachings and instructions (*torah*).<sup>5</sup> Eventually, all of the Pentateuch—as the acknowledged record of such teachings and instructions—came to be regarded, naturally enough, as *Torah*. And so, by telescoping the two usages—the general and the specialized—tradition took it for granted that Moses was the author of *the Torah*. Nor is tradition the only sinner in this case. Modern scholarship, after emphatically rejecting the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, keeps on referring to the Torah as "the Law."

In any case, the distinction between sacred and temporal writings is clearly evidenced in the account of II Kings 22,

<sup>5</sup> The earliest references are Deuteronomy 31:9 and Joshua 8:31. They become more frequent in later books, such as Kings and Chronicles.

which tells us that a particular book of Torah was brought to light in the 18th year of King Josiah, that is, in 621 B.C. This name alone, Book of Torah, is sufficient to justify the enormous impact of that discovery on all concerned—not to mention its repercussions through the ages and down to our own times. But the same designation—a Book of Torah—also implies selection and classification, that is, a form of research, no matter what the underlying criteria may have been. The recognition of a written Torah, in the spiritual sense of the term, meant that, as early as the 7th century B.C., the book was the accepted record of a deeply significant process. Yet the process itself was by no means completed; it was still very much in progress. The careers of most of the prophetic authors still lay ahead. Whole chapters of history remained to be written. Thus current experience was being screened and preserved before the total experience had run its full course. The ground floor, so to speak, was occupied and lived in at the same time that upper stories were being added on. In other words, the Bible was forming even as its living source was still productive, and none could foretell the end of the process or the final form of its record. A Jeremiah or an Ezekiel could and did read past biblical history while each was making biblical history to come. Neither could have named many books that were ultimately to constitute the Old Testament. Yet each knew that he was witness to, and participant in, a quest for eternal verities.

What were the standards whereby Torah could be distinguished from secular writings? They can only be inferred; but it is certain that such criteria did in fact exist. For biblical authors indicate time and again that what they were offering was in effect an anthology. The reader who might be interested in details which the writers did not regard as germane to their theme is told repeatedly where he can find them: in the *Book of the Wars of Yahweh* (Numbers 21:14); the *Book of Jashar* (Joshua 10:13); the *Chronicle of Solomon* (I Kings

11:41); the *Chronicles of the Kings of Israel* (I Kings 14:19; 15:31; 16:5 ff.); the *Chronicles of the Kings of Judah* (I Kings 14:29; 15:7; 23; 22:46). These asides are highly instructive. For they testify to the existence of a scriptural canon, however fluid the concept may have been, already under the early kings, if not before. Indeed, the oldest of these references, the one in Numbers 21:14, is assigned by critics to an early stratum of the Pentateuch, that is, early in the first millennium B. C. Now since such selectiveness calls for analysis, and analysis presupposes study, it follows that Bible study is indirectly attested close to three thousand years ago.

Nor is this all. How did the older biblical authors, those responsible for the patriarchal narratives, come by their material? It can be shown, though not here, that these writers in turn were at pains to follow traditions that went a long way back, at times all the way back to the patriarchal age itself.<sup>8</sup> Hence in reserving thirty centuries for the total span of biblical studies, I have stayed well within the conservative zone. A few centuries could be added without undue risk.

To recapitulate, then, the argument so far, the first stage of Bible study consisted in carefully distinguishing between Torah and secular literature. Next came the work of the pioneer translators into Greek, the first link in an endless chain of Bible translations. Another early phase of critical, if not strictly independent, study led to the final adoption of the Hebrew canon, towards the end of the first century of the present era.

## II

The official conclusion of the canon meant two things in particular: first, the biblical process had terminated some time before, and second, the record of that process could henceforth be subjected to ever more minute and intensive study. The research was to swell to an enormous volume, and to yield rich results in quality. Gradually there emerged a text

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the paper cited in footnote 2.

that won wide acceptance, first in its consonantal core, and eventually with vowels added. Rabbinic scholarship probed ever deeper into the legal content of the Bible. Further translations added fresh insights and uncovered new problems. Origen's Hexapla, a six-column correlation of text, transcription, and the major Greek versions, was an achievement of truly monumental scholarship. Medieval commentators, grammarians, and philologists did their share towards a keener penetration of the original. But all these prodigious labors followed, with scarcely an exception, one fundamental restriction: interpretation of sacred scripture had to stay in a groove carved out by tradition. The orthodox would not think of a completely free and independent approach; and the uncommitted seldom knew enough to deviate from tradition. Thus the climate was distinctly unfavorable to anything resembling internal biblical criticism.

There were, to be sure, isolated exceptions.<sup>7</sup> Some Church Fathers maintained that the Pentateuch could not have been written by a single author (Celsus, Ptolemy); one dated the Book of Daniel to the Maccabean period (Porphyry); and another argued that various Psalms were equally late (Theodore of Mopsuestia). Among the leading medieval Jewish scholars, only Abraham Ibn Ezra (1092-1167) commented guardedly on several passages in the Pentateuch which, on internal grounds, could not have been written by Moses.<sup>8</sup> For example, Deuteronomy 1:5 states that "Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to expound the Torah." But beyond the Jordan, Ibn Ezra implies, refers to the east side of the river; hence this statement had to be written on the west side, i.e., in Palestine. Since Moses never got to Palestine, he could not have used this phrase. Moreover, since the first example that Ibn Ezra cites at this point

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York, 1941), pp. 41ff.

<sup>8</sup> I. Husik, "Maimonides and Spinoza on the Interpretation of the Bible," *Jour. Amer. Or. Soc.*, Vol. 55 (1935), Supplement, pp. 22-40.

is Deuteronomy 31:9, "And Moses wrote this Torah," it follows that the commentator was being remarkably explicit under the circumstances.<sup>9</sup>

It remained, however, for Baruch Spinoza, who approached the Scriptures "in a spirit of entire freedom and free from prejudice,"<sup>10</sup> to lay the foundations of modern biblical criticism in the 17th century. But the real flowering of the literary and historical investigation of the Old Testament did not come until the 19th century, with Julius Wellhausen achieving the classic formulation. Traditional views on the date and composition of various portions of the Bible were set aside in favor of an independent assessment on historical and critical grounds. The upshot was the so-called documentary hypothesis, which assigns most of the early books, and especially the Pentateuch, to a combination of authors, each with his own historical, theological, and stylistic idiosyncrasies. Later Redactors did the piecing together—cutting and rearranging, harmonizing and editorializing—thus eventually whipping the whole into the shape that tradition took over. The main sources of the Pentateuch, according to this hypothesis, emerged as J or the Yahwist, E or the Elohist, D or the Deuteronomist, and P or the Priestly document, all blended by anonymous but more or less autocratic Redactors. Yet enough inconsistencies and duplications remain, it is felt, to guide the scholar in his critical analysis.

No objective appraisal can fail to recognize that the method employed by the documentary critics was basically sound, and that their general results, so far from undermining the validity of the Bible as history, have actually contributed to a better understanding and appreciation of it. The trouble with this approach has been not the criticism which it employs, but many of the critics who have used it. The real pioneers were men of genius. Their disciples, however, turned

<sup>9</sup> In other words, the "secret" to which Ibn Ezra alludes concerns the statement that Moses wrote the Torah.

<sup>10</sup> Husik, *loc. cit.*, pp. 22ff.

out to be, all too often, no more than cultists, men who had not gone through the mental processes of their masters, but resorted instead to mechanical application of principles that they had not fully digested. Fundamentally sound ideas were thus permitted to run wild. A single biblical verse might be cut up into as many as four separate sources. The P document, for example, was dissected into ten underlying units, ten assorted P's squeezed into a single pod. It is this type of artificial fragmentation that helped to obscure the genuine merits and achievements of biblical criticism.<sup>11</sup>

In one respect, moreover, higher criticism overreached itself even in the hands of its best exponents. In seeking to cast off the shackles imposed by rigid traditional interpretation, the new school went to the opposite extreme. The separate and independent sources of the Pentateuch, the critics alleged, were not content to relate history as each saw it; they often invented their subject matter, so that the end product was largely a work of fancy and imagination. Much of it, to be sure, proved to be great literature; but the historical kernel around which that literature grew up was slight and buried deep under layers of folklore and fiction.

It was at this point that a new tool appeared, a tool that was to act as a powerful brake on documentary criticism. This much-needed corrective owed its presence and effectiveness to archaeology; or, to put it more simply, it was archaeology.

Biblical archaeology, as a study that can be listed among the empirical disciplines, does not set out to prove or disprove anything.<sup>12</sup> It seeks to uncover facts and to choose among the various probabilities that present themselves, without regard to what bearing the results may have on the validity of the biblical record. In other words, the object of archae-

<sup>11</sup> For the various schools of biblical criticism, cf. C. R. North, "Pentateuchal Criticism," in H. H. Rowley, ed., *Old Testament and Modern Study*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), pp. 48-83.

<sup>12</sup> The classic work on the subject is W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (Baltimore: Pelican Books, 1949).

ology in general, and biblical archaeology in particular, is not to determine whether such and such a statement in a source is true or false. Archaeology merely demonstrates what the given statement means. This it has been doing for decades, with increasingly noteworthy results.

It would, therefore, be wholly inconsistent with the aim of archaeology, and misleading to boot, to assert flatly that biblical archaeology has validated the Old Testament and dealt a death blow to higher criticism. Many have made such claims, but each instance and detail has to be judged on its own merits. What has happened is that on uncounted occasions archaeology has incidentally served to authenticate and elucidate the background or the detail of a given biblical passage, and to correct the more sweeping and extravagant assumptions of the critics. Perhaps the most notable overall result is this: none of the Pentateuchal and other early historical sources of the Old Testament invented its material. No author felt free to tamper with his facts. Each acted as the custodian of a tradition that had already acquired an aura of sanctity. Style and emphasis might vary according to the writer's ability and understanding; but the received content was viewed as untouchable,<sup>13</sup> whether or not the author had grasped its full import. In other words, the material was treated as canonical long before an official decision in the matter had to be made. It is on this count that the position of the earlier critics has had to be modified most drastically. J or P or D or the like cannot be charged with any kind of fabrication; each was but a humble intermediary in the chain of living tradition.

### III

Yet written and material witnesses of the past—its documents and monuments—can focus only on so many separate panels of a larger integrated composition. The aim of history, how-

<sup>13</sup> The rabbinic definition of a canonical work is that "it defiles the hands," meaning that it is untouchable.

ever, is to recover and re-enact the whole picture; to concentrate not only on sundry events and actors, but on the whole underlying society in its march through time. Certainly this must be the primary requirement of biblical history, if the full significance of that whole process is to be duly apprehended. Biblical research has gradually taken that direction. This means that having probed deep into the biblical record, with the refined tools of philology, documentary criticism, and archaeology, we are back at last to the original biblical process, or, in other words, the parent society.

Since no significant society was ever an island, it can be understood only in comparison with, and against the background of, the neighboring civilizations of its age. This is especially true of biblical society, since without such comparative data an objective appraisal of the biblical achievement is unthinkable. Thus the latest chapter of biblical research, the phase of study that is now upon us—the logical next step after documentary criticism and archaeology—is what may be described, for want of a better title, as the comparative analysis of pertinent societies.

Does this latest development, one may ask at this point, owe anything to the influence of Arnold J. Toynbee? Scarcely, if at all, and for the following reasons. First, although civilizations or societies, rather than nations and states, are to Toynbee the basic blocks of history, this particular mode of approach did not originate with Toynbee. He may employ it with greater erudition and on a grander scale, but he would also be the last to deny his indebtedness on this score to various predecessors. Second, more than one student of the ancient Near East set out in the same direction long before Toynbee's system had crystallized. Third, and most important of all, Toynbee's view of the pre-classical world is seriously distorted and out of focus. He gratuitously links some societies that should be kept apart, e.g., the Sumerian and the Indic, while setting up separate civilizations where no such

divisions actually existed, e.g., Sumerian as distinct from Babylonian. The plain truth is that technique alone will not yield constructive results where the content is primitive or lacking altogether. And superficial virtuosity is a poor substitute for genuine insight. In this instance, the deficit is irreparable because here it involves the first half of the recorded history of mankind. When so much basic coverage proves to be contrived, shallow, and untenable, the remainder cannot rest on solid foundations.

As a new and penetrating tool for biblical research, therefore, the comparative study of ancient Near Eastern societies bears little resemblance to Toynbee's surface soundings. Nor is there anything in the actual results that mechanistic philosophies of history could have dreamed up independently. To be sure, the conclusions to date are as yet tentative, and an incalculable amount of work still lies ahead. Nevertheless, definite contours have begun to emerge. These can be indicated here only in barest outline.

Higher criticism centered on the minutest kind of scrutiny of what one might call the biblical day-to-day records. Diaries are often notable not so much for what they include as for what they omit. The omissions need not imply that the record is slanted. They may concern details that were self-evident to contemporaries, but could not be readily filled in by posterity. In this way, much of the background is lost, and without that background, the transmitted picture tends to be flat, if not altogether unintelligible at various points; it lacks sharpness and depth. The critics tried to restore all such gaps in the Bible record. After so many centuries, it was a hopeless task. In retouching the vast original canvas, they sometimes covered up existing traces, without fully realizing that they were, after all, faking very old masters, with not enough data—or ability—to guide them.

The advent of archaeology helped to undo much of the damage. For archaeology has essentially restored the back-

ground and, in so doing, authenticated much of the foreground. But there are limits to the service that archaeology alone may be reasonably expected to perform. Whatever may be the way to a man's heart, the way to the core of a civilization is not through pots and pans alone; nor even through the collective testimony of all its material remains. For instance, there is no more impressive physical witness of the civilization of Egypt than the pyramid; nor a more lofty material survival of ancient Mesopotamia than its temple tower or *zigurrat*. Yet the architectural data on the pyramid and the zigurrat, data with which archaeology normally stops, do not begin to express the profound difference between Egypt and Mesopotamia as the two oldest historic experiences of mankind. To get the full measure of that contrast one has to penetrate beyond outward appearances to the concepts behind these towering monuments: the pyramid was a majestic memorial to death; the zigurrat an attempt at contact with heaven. The one speaks of resignation; the other is animated by hope. These facts cannot be grasped until the combined evidence of inscriptions and monuments has been duly evaluated. It is only then that we can see how the fundamental problem of God, man, and the state was resolved by Egypt and Mesopotamia respectively. But by then we are no longer concerned about palaces and temples and cemeteries, persons and periods. We are faced instead with living societies, each pursuing its own particular course, a course whose direction is outlined but whose ultimate terminus is as yet not in view.

The important thing about these two oldest societies in history, these two major historic civilizations, is that they remained distinctive and uninterchangeable, although they coexisted for thousands of years and were ever aware of, and in touch with, each other. It is precisely because they are so sharply contrasted, yet parallel, that the genius of each stands out in bold relief. The societal curtain that separated Egypt and Mesopotamia, call it the lotus curtain, if you will, proved

to be insuperable—more effective indeed than any conceivable barrier of masonry or metal.

By the same token, we are now that much better conditioned to appreciate the difference between biblical society and its two illustrious older neighbors. The biblical process as a whole can now be viewed in its proper perspective in time and space. We can see what this process owed to neighboring influences and what was new in it and epoch-making. The evidence is cumulative and comparative. And if the overall biblical record gains much in credibility, it is not because the Bible tells us so, but because the civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt have furnished support.

Perhaps the greatest contributions of Mesopotamia to world progress were her ideas of law and government. The law there was impersonally conceived and binding on king and subjects alike.<sup>14</sup> One consequence of this was government by assembly, as opposed to autocratic rule; another was the appeal of the resulting system to many areas, near and far. So much for the temporal aspect of Mesopotamian society. The spiritual side, however, was quite another matter. Since the gods, too, were committed to government by assembly, no single Mesopotamian deity, not even the head of the pantheon, was truly omnipotent. The upshot was indecision in heaven and insecurity on earth.

Now, the very beginning of the biblical process is traced in the Book of Genesis to God's command that Abraham leave his home in Mesopotamia and journey to what is presently to become the Promised Land (Genesis 12). The reason for the departure is elsewhere expressly designated as religious ("they had worshipped other gods"—Joshua 23:2). This was no casual episode: Abraham's migration is soon solemnized by a covenant with God which comes to be regarded as the foundation of all biblical history.

<sup>14</sup> E. A. Speiser, "Early Law and Civilization," *The Canadian Bar Review*, Vol. XXXI (1953), pp. 873ff.

In objective retrospect, historic Israel lay within the cultural orbit of Mesopotamia insofar as law and government were concerned. Many literary social motifs in Genesis (most of Primeval History; the background of the patriarchal narratives) likewise point to Mesopotamia. The one major difference lies in the sphere of religion. The biblical ideal of monotheism cannot possibly be reconciled with the invincible polytheism of Mesopotamia. On a comparative societal basis, therefore, and in the light of a mass of detailed material, one is forced to accept an actual migration from Mesopotamia in the patriarchal period, and interpret it as a protest against local beliefs and practices, and a search for something more valid and enduring. The very prominence of authentic Mesopotamian matter in the early portions of the Bible lends vivid color to such a reconstruction. Who, then, could be in a better position to protest, to rebel against the spiritual content of Mesopotamian civilization, than the founding patriarch who is repeatedly identified as a native of the land? It is surely no accident that Abraham fits into that background so naturally and in so many ways. All of modern scholarship's factual resources and ingenuity would not have sufficed to improvise so intricate an agreement.

Arrival in Palestine exposes the newcomers to the ways of Egypt. The nature of that experience is reflected dramatically in the traditional accounts of the Sojourn, the Oppression, and the Exodus. At first glance it may seem strange that, in contrast to more distant Mesopotamia, neighboring Egypt left scarcely any positive imprint on Hebrew society. The reason is clear enough if it is borne in mind that Israel's historic and cultural origins were in Mesopotamia. It becomes clearer still when one considers the societal chasm that separated Egypt from the Fertile Crescent. The Egyptian system, with its deified ruler subject to no impersonally conceived law, was incurably totalitarian.<sup>15</sup> Now if the Mesopotamian way,

<sup>15</sup> Cf. J. A. Wilson, *The Burden of Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 49-50.

for all its congenial features of law and government and cultural traditions, was to the Hebrew patriarchs something that had best be left behind, then the Egyptian attitude towards the problem of God, man, and the state must have been to them a horror and an abomination. Moses emerges accordingly as liberator from dire spiritual oppression, and the remembrance of bondage in Egypt is never allowed to fade in all the centuries of biblical history to follow. Once more, therefore, we witness a protest against an alien way of life, a protest solemnized this time by the covenant of Mt. Sinai. And once again, the central figure at this decisive juncture is a native of the country against which the protest is directed. To be sure, archaeology has failed so far to unearth any direct trace of a historical Moses, and in all likelihood never will. Tradition made sure that the place of his burial would never be discovered. Yet the internal evidence of comparative studies, and especially the evidence from societal comparisons, requires a leader like Moses no less urgently than would a certified likeness in painting or sculpture.

To sum up, the ancient Near East was the home of the world's earliest historic civilizations. They became historic when they had progressed far enough to seek answers to the overriding problem of society, the universe, and the individual. Several distinctive solutions were evolved in the process, over a period half as long as all recorded time. Of these, the biblical solution stands out because of its unique effect on subsequent history. If today we can appreciate the biblical process better than ever before, it is because we see it in the setting of the major contemporary societies, societies that had laid much of the groundwork. Yet the spiritual progress to which the Bible is witness was made possible by rejection more than acceptance, by resolute opposition to basic tenets of the great civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

To say this is only to state a theme, a theme that remains

to be developed in full detail. Our steadily increasing knowledge of ancient Near Eastern societies offers grounds for hope that much more will be learned in years to come. At a minimum, we should obtain further proof that only an imaginary line separates the deep-rooted present from the living past.

## REFLECTIONS ON TWO LOYALTY PURGES

*Gabriel Jackson*

MANY GOVERNMENTS which normally permit a wide diversity of opinion have at critical moments in their history demanded proof of ideological orthodoxy. The summons to close ranks comes at times when the national security appears to be threatened. Suspicion of disloyalty, hence investigation and penalty, tend to fall most heavily on the professional and intellectual classes since they constitute the most articulate portion of the population. In reaction to the combined threats of foreign power and ideology, the general population support, or at the very least acquiesce in, the official demand for strict conformity.

The United States has just passed through such a period. Between the years 1947 and 1955, this country purged the government, the entertainment industries, the schools, and to some extent the universities, of persons who seemed to have been associated with some aspect of Marxism and who did not, before or during these years, vehemently abjure their leftist opinions and associations. In general, since 1955 spokesmen of public opinion seem to be reassured of the now negligible influence of communism within the United States. At the same time they have complained of intellectual timidity, of cautiousness, of "play it safe" attitudes among the younger generation. It may well be that the social science textbooks of the future will refer to the recent purge of civil servants and intellectuals as a transitional stage from the Age of Anxiety to the Age of Conformity, or perhaps better stated, the Age of Anxious Conformity.

The loyalty investigations may be examined for their specific impact on civil liberties and legal procedures, and they may be examined in broader terms as indices of political psychology. While I am concerned with both these aspects of the question, I hope in the present essay to contribute to the psychological understanding of the recent American purge by comparing it with a similar event in the history of Spain: the purge of Erasmist intellectuals from the Spanish Church and universities in the decade of the 1530's. At first blush, American readers may find it preposterous to draw a parallel between any event in the cultural history of the United States and that of Spain. But the black legend of Spanish intolerance has been considerably overdrawn, while patriotic pride in fundamental Anglo-Saxon liberties has obscured some of the limitations on intellectual liberty in the United States. In any case, when background circumstances, motives, methods, and results have been compared, the analogy may be seen to have some value for comprehending events of our own time. In the following pages I shall try to compare the national situations out of which each of the purges arose, sketch the course taken by each purge, and then point out relevant parallels and contrasts.

## I

Spain, in the opening decades of the 16th century, was grappling with all the uncertainties attendant upon her new position as a great world power. Until the close of the 15th century, her energies had been occupied almost entirely with the political and religious problems of the peninsula. In the thirty years following 1492, she acquired an immense American and Pacific empire. She also expanded her political and military interests in Italy and fought the Turks for control of the western Mediterranean. In 1517, due to extraordinary coincidences of marriage and death, the new Spanish Empire was merged with the central European empire of the

Habsburgs in the person of the future Emperor Charles V. The latter's accession to the throne of Spain and his subsequent election as Holy Roman Emperor coincided with the Lutheran revolution, first religious and then political, in Germany. By the mid-twenties, and for the remainder of Charles' reign, Spain served as the political, religious, economic, and military center from which the Habsburgs Empire attempted to maintain religious orthodoxy in Europe. Thus, in thirty revolutionary years, Spain had been catapulted to world power and responsibility.

This period of rapid expansion coincided with important intellectual developments at home. Under the aegis of Cardinal Jiménez de Cisneros, Primate of Spain and later regent before the arrival of Charles, the Spanish Church underwent a profound transformation known as the Pre-Reform, Pre-Reform because it eliminated from Spanish practice before 1520 most of the abuses of luxury, corruption, and simony, the resentment against which in Germany was to give the Lutheran revolution its strongest impulse. But austerity within the Church was not the only aim of Cisneros' reforms. Deeply influenced by the humanism both of Italy and of Northern Europe, Cisneros wished to make Spain the intellectual center of Christendom. Founding the new University of Alcalá, he invited Europe's leading scholars to assist in the creation of a polyglot Bible to provide the world with the first critical, comparative text in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. A generation of Spanish students, many of them destined for high posts in Church and government, became sophisticated linguists and admirers of the manifold varieties of humanism. Reading Erasmus' *Handbook of the Christian Knight*, they responded enthusiastically to his emphasis on the indwelling spirit of Christ in the receptive human heart as against the priestly emphasis on observance of the sacraments. Doubtless also they enjoyed his endless jibes at dull, self-satisfied monks.

Before the Lutheran revolution, such ideas constituted a

permissible, if disturbing and perhaps unorthodox, current in Spanish intellectual life. But with Luther's fulminations against the clergy, his insistence on justification by faith, and his reduction of the sacraments, the ideas and ironical tone of Erasmus came to be suspected of heresy. When, within a few years, Lutheranism threatened to split the Empire both religiously and politically, when in addition the Turks conquered Hungary at the battle of Mohacs (1526), and when the Emperor found himself unhappily, but nonetheless bitterly, at war with both the Pope and France—a strong wind of orthodoxy swept through Spain. In 1527 a theological congress met at Valladolid to consider the errors contained in Erasmus' writings. His partisans were able to adjourn the assembly without specific action being taken, but this congress marked the beginning of a strong reaction against everything connected with his name.

The issues were by no means entirely religious. Erasmism was associated with an internationalist point of view, with the dream, generous if naive, of reuniting Christendom on the basis of a purified, humanist Catholicism. The Erasmists championed the young Emperor rather than the Pope, and they encouraged his early efforts to conciliate the German rebels. A high proportion of the Erasmists were known to be *conversos*, descendants of the thousands of Spanish Jews who had become Christians during the century prior to Queen Isabella's expulsion of the Jews. In addition, Erasmist ideals had features in common with the many forms of mysticism and illuminism being practiced in 16th-century Spain. As the Holy Office condemned one after another of these "inner light" doctrines, their devotees infiltrated the ranks of the Erasmists. Those who led the opposition to Erasmism were largely Old Christians, *hildalgos* claiming pure Christian ancestry and proud of their austerity, which contrasted with the corrupt luxury of Flemish courtiers and Italian diplomats; attached to the spartan, authoritarian ideals of the late

Queen Isabella; following Pope rather than Emperor; and suspicious of all foreign customs, persons, and ideas. Most of them were members of the regular clergy and staunch believers in all the sacraments and ceremonials. They had always resented Erasmus' ridicule of their brethren. By the year 1527, they held him responsible, even if indirectly, for the Lutheran revolt, and were in no way surprised that the majority of his Spanish followers should be found among the *conversos*. Hence multiple, and relatively new, problems of foreign policy coincided with a keen ideological struggle and a streak of xenophobia to form the background of the purge carried out between 1527 and 1540.

Let us now turn to the recent history of the United States. Throughout the 19th century, American energies were engaged almost exclusively in the political and economic development of the continent. After the outbreak of the Cuban revolution in 1895, the United States became increasingly involved in the Caribbean and the Pacific. The difficulties and responsibilities of imperialism, formerly thought of as peculiarly European problems, became American problems also. Not until 1917, however, did this country consciously act on a global scale. In both world wars, the hitherto isolated United States played a decisive role as the major power in a coalition fighting to preserve the dominance of democratic capitalism in western Europe and the Western Hemisphere. As in the case of Spain, worldwide power and responsibility were thrust upon an unprepared nation within a period of little more than thirty years.

The situation of the United States in that thirty year period was greatly complicated by the Russian Revolution of 1917 and by the depression of the 1930's. The Russian Revolution led to the successful establishment of a society which rejected both capitalism and political democracy while claiming to create a society that was more truly democratic than anything known in the West. The theoretical basis of the new society

was the corpus of writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin; and its militant supporters constituted the Communist International. The writings of Marx and Engels had long been influential in Europe. They formed the theoretical basis of the large democratic socialist parties of the continent, and had exerted some influence on the British Labor Party. Not until the depression, however, were they widely influential in the United States. The prolonged economic crisis of the 1930's shook American confidence in democratic capitalism. In Europe west of Russia, fascism appeared to be "the wave of the future." The Soviet Union received credit for rapid economic growth and was the only great power calling for collective security against Hitler. In these circumstances, thousands of Americans embraced Marxism in either its democratic or communist form. As a legal party, the Communists eventually claimed one hundred thousand members. Several hundred thousand non-communists joined "Popular Front" type organizations in which communist participation was for the most part perfectly open (though their degree of inside control was and still is a subject on which accurate conclusions are hard to draw).

From 1941 to 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union were allies in a war of defense against Hitler, but after the war the United States immediately felt challenged by the advance of communism in Europe under Russian auspices, and a few years later in Asia under Russian and Chinese auspices. With this tension, ideas and associations which in the 1930's had been permissible, if unorthodox, now became suspected of disloyalty. Both the democratic Marxists and the communists and ex-communists were to be found mostly among the professional and intellectual layers of the population. In addition, those influenced by Marxism were likely to be New Dealers and internationalists. Proportionately, they came more from immigrant and seaboard groups than from the interior of the continent. They were also likely to be con-

cerned with liberal humanitarian social causes: the plight of sharecroppers, the rights of religious and racial minorities, the fate of anti-fascist refugees. These causes, indeed, formed the common denominator of sympathy between the communists and thousands of non-communist liberals. Since the Communist Party was always widely condemned by public opinion, many communists infiltrated liberal organizations where they could advance the causes they favored without acknowledging their communist affiliations.

The strongest demand for the investigation of such persons and organizations came from the formerly isolationist regions and political groups. The uncertainties of America's new world position brought with them a deep fear and suspicion of foreign ideas. Between 1947 and 1955, the powerful demand for ideological conformity motivated the purge of thousands of civil servants, teachers, actors, and writers tainted, however mildly, by Marxist associations. Let us now compare the course of the two purges, that in Spain, 1527-40, with that in the United States, 1947-55.

## II

In Spain the purge was centralized entirely in the hands of the Inquisition. The Holy Office consisted of a network of investigators, prisons, and courts separate from both the secular and canonical court systems. The Spanish Inquisition, under direct Crown control, had been founded by Ferdinand and Isabella for the dual purpose of eradicating heresy and financing the conquest of Granada. Confiscating the wealth of the Andalusian *conversos* and burning perhaps two thousand of them at the stake in the 1480's, it quickly acquired its reputation as an instrument of ferocious repression. In the 1520's and 30's, however, with which we are concerned, burnings were infrequent. The Inquisitor General Manrique was a humanist who frequently exhorted the friars to cease their libelous attacks on Erasmus. In Valencia, where the tri-

bunal was busy testing the sincerity of the *moriscos* (newly converted Moors), Manrique reminded his investigators of the promises of leniency made to the Moors by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492; in his view, the Inquisition existed as much to protect the *moriscos* against persecution by the Old Christians as it did to investigate charges of heresy. But Manrique's personal authority was greatly reduced for political reasons in 1529, and when the leading Erasmists were imprisoned, he confined his gestures to an occasional wish that the courts of the Inquisition proceed to judgment as rapidly as possible. The Holy Office might be headed temporarily by a man of tolerance and humanity, but neither with regard to the *moriscos* nor to the Erasmists did it try to act in the spirit of Manrique's admonitions.

The pressure for a purge came not from the heads of the Holy Office itself but from the friars, particularly the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Trinitarians, who keenly resented their defeat when the congress of 1527 failed to expurgate or condemn the works of Erasmus. It was possible to get at the Erasmists by establishing their connections with the illuminists and the handful of Lutherans. At this time of religious exaltation and intellectual ferment, there appeared a number of *beatas*, women who conducted salons in which excellent conversation was mixed with daring discussion of theological problems and uninhibited sexual conduct. Among the most famous of these women was Francisca Hernández. At one time or another in the 1520's most of the prominent young scholars of Alcalá had known her. Arrested in 1528 on complaints of moral scandal and illuminist heresies, she said very little and was treated patiently for over a year. In 1529, the burning of a heretic priest in Granada seems to have reminded her of the ultimate rigors possible to the Inquisition. She began to testify freely, and to recall in rich detail conversations dating back to the early twenties. She became the

principal informant supplying the tribunal with the names of the Erasmists.

The hearings of the Inquisition were secret and most of the witnesses were themselves under arrest. One of the few legal defenses available to the suspect was to disqualify testimony as coming from a personal enemy. He was not, of course, given the names of informants. Indeed, it was perfectly legitimate for the Inquisition to alter details so as to make it impossible for the suspect to identify his accuser. Thus the defendant would try to list all his possible enemies and hope that with luck the list would include his accusers. In the rare case that testimony came only from one or two sources and that these were named by the victim as his personal enemies, the investigation might end with a quick clearance and a fatherly admonition not to associate with the sort of unorthodox characters who were likely to be in trouble, and hence to get you in trouble.

The acts for which people were investigated by the Inquisition were not crimes against either secular or canon law. They were crimes of thought, intent, and association. Had one praised Erasmus because he ridiculed monks? Had one said, sometime back in 1518 or 1519, that there was some justice in Luther's fulminations on the sale of indulgences? Had one said, or thought, that a state of inner repentance was more important to achieve grace than were oral confession and penance? Had one ever doubted any miracle officially accepted by the Church? Had one supposed that because he knew Greek and had worked on the polyglot Bible that he understood theology better than the professors? Had one frequented a certain well-known *beata*? And other such queries.

Safeguards normally practiced in the secular courts were dropped by the Inquisition. Trial by jury and confrontation of witnesses, with cross-examination, were not practiced in Spain. But under civil law both parties saw the witnesses sworn even though testimony was taken secretly. The judge

was supposed to cross-examine all witnesses to test for reliability and prejudice. The testimony of minors and close relatives was disqualified. Even these safeguards, slight as they are in comparison with those of modern democratic justice, were not observed by the Inquisition. Witnesses could very easily qualify for the prosecution. *Conversos*, Moors, *moris-  
cos*, children, and common criminals could testify against a suspect, but not for him.

Prominent Erasmists like Juan de Vergara, the brilliant young secretary of Cardinal Fonseca of Toledo, did not accept investigation supinely. Vergara tried first to use influence, counting on the powerful patronage of the Cardinal, but while the latter was greatly aggrieved on his secretary's behalf, he could not hurry the tribunal nor see the evidence nor know the witnesses. Moreover, he died early in 1534, six months after the arrest of Vergara and three years before the final disposition of the case. Since Vergara had many prominent connections and had been questioned several times before his actual arrest, he knew his accusers better than most suspects. He had been denounced by Fray Bernardino de Flores, an Old Christian and a leader in the xenophobic *comunero* rebellion of 1520. Flores had once debated the accuracy of the Vulgate Bible with Vergara and the young *converso* intellectual had overwhelmed the stern old friar with his philological erudition. Knowing this, Vergara spiritedly defended his scholarly work before his investigators. Part of the evidence against him alleged that he had imported heretical works from Holland and Germany. He claimed that he was purchasing them for the university library at Alcalá. He knew that most of the material connecting him with the illuminist heresy came from the testimony of Francisca Hernández. He challenged the accuracy of her memory concerning conversations dating back more than ten years. He pointed out that other *beatas* confirming her charges had been sharing Francisca's prison cell, and he accused the Inqui-

sition of priming her memory of his conversations by reading passages of Luther's works to her. Eventually solitude, the incredible slowness of procedure, the possibility of torture, the prospects of total disgrace and life imprisonment, broke Vergara's will. In December, 1535, he abjured his errors on the scaffold before his colleagues of the Toledo Cathedral chapter, accepted penitential parole to an Augustinian convent for a year, and afterward lived on in silent freedom. Altogether perhaps seventy Erasmist intellectuals passed through a similar process in the years 1527-40, and the example of their tribulations reduced to silence and outward conformity many other men who had been enthusiasts of Eramus before 1527.

In the United States the purge was not conducted by any one organization. At the governmental level there were congressional committees, a Loyalty Review Board, various departmental committees screening their own employees, several state and municipal boards passing upon the loyalty of school and university teachers. As the basis of their investigations and dismissals, the entertainment industries used *Red Channels* (published in 1950), the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations, and several privately edited listings. Since the variety of investigating agencies was so great, procedures are more difficult to describe in general terms. The announced objective in all cases was to free the given department, or school, or studio, of all communists. Former communists could establish their loyalty by full confession of their own pasts, especially if their confessions included the names of their associates. From the viewpoint of the purgers, little sympathy was to be wasted on former communists and "fellow travelers" if they were not willing actively to aid in the purge. Believers in democratic Marxism and Popular Front liberals of the thirties were deliberately confounded with communists past and present. Also, with the exception of a handful of cases involving espionage, the charges concerned thought and

association, not acts defined by any criminal law. Had one belonged to a certain bookstore allegedly run by communists? Had one contributed money or attended meetings of any of the many organizations on the Attorney General's list? Did one read *The New Masses* or *The Daily Worker*, or belong to Marxist study groups? Had one contributed to organizations favoring the Loyalists during the Spanish Civil War?

The nature of hearing procedures varied greatly. Those of congressional committees were not only public, but televised. Owen Lattimore and other prominent victims have said that much of the legal counsel they received had more to do with handling press relations than with answering committee questions. Hearings of the Loyalty Review Board and of most departmental boards were private. State or city hearings might attract more or less publicity depending upon the persons involved. The majority of those purged had no hearings. In 1950 a dismissed civil servant tested government loyalty procedures in the case of *Bailey vs. Richardson*. The majority of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia held that the government had no legal obligation to grant a hearing, that civil service employment was a privilege, not a right, and that the government was always free to dismiss people, with cause or without.

Since the investigations were not courtroom trials charging specific violations of specific laws, it was perfectly possible for the investigating agencies to dispense with the normal safeguards that apply in American courts. Most boards allowed witnesses to appear accompanied by their lawyers. These lawyers could suggest questions to be put to hostile witnesses and could protest questions put to their clients, but they could not cross-examine the witnesses for the investigating committees. In the almost total absence of relevant documentary evidence, everything depended upon the credibility of witnesses. Government informers like Louis Budenz were carefully protected from cross-examination although

they frequently contradicted themselves; whereas the government, through both congressional committees and the Department of Justice, attempted over a period of four years to build a perjury case against Owen Lattimore by repeated marathon sessions in which it was hoped that he could be led to contradict himself in some significant fashion. If it was impossible for suspects to cross-examine the open testimony of their accusers, it was even more difficult for them to combat the many anonymous accusations. All open testimony at Dorothy Bailey's hearing was favorable to her, but the Loyalty Review Board fired her from a non-sensitive civil service post on the basis of confidential information which the Board admitted it was not itself in a position to evaluate accurately. Protection of sources and inviolability of FBI files were repeatedly given as the reasons why suspects could not have full access to the case against them.

Like the Spanish Erasmists, many American victims of the purge were broken principally by the weight of the investigating procedures. No one was physically tortured, or held in solitary confinement, or prevented from sending and receiving private mail, or forced to take part in humiliating public ceremonies. For these most important differences between 16th-century Spain and the United States we are indebted to the accumulated legal traditions of the English-speaking world and to the steady progress of the humane treatment of human beings (in time of peace) since the 18th century. But if one was fired on the basis of secret information in the files of the FBI, or refused all radio and TV work because his name was listed in *Red Channels*, what recourse was possible? Even if such stumbling blocks were not present, how many individuals have the financial resources and the stamina to fight a series of court actions in order to clear their names of slander, especially when even full vindication will not oblige either the government or an employer to hand back a job long since lost? For each Owen Lattimore or Paul

Sweezy or Corliss Lamont there are hundreds who have just quietly readjusted their lives as best they could after being expelled from their professions. And in the warning of their fate makes certain, for the present, that their children will not sign any petitions or join any organizations.

### III

When we compare the record of the two purges, a number of significant parallels appear, all the more significant, I would emphasize, for the very reason that 16th-century Spain and 20th-century United States are so different from each other in political, economic, and institutional character. First, there is the demand on the part of an inexperienced, insecure young world power for orthodoxy in the area felt to be most crucial by each society: religious orthodoxy in the Spanish case, political orthodoxy in the American. The purge of the Erasmists was a conscientious effort to contain Spain's rich intellectual life within the framework of religious orthodoxy. In the United States during the purge years, any number of minority social causes were condemned as communist, and high government officials could refer to the Democratic Party as the "party of treason," presumably because the few traces of Marxist influence to be discovered in American politics were felt in that party.

The demand for orthodoxy quickly outruns all reasonable judgment. It is clear that the Lutheran revolution in Germany represented a strong challenge to the international power and ideals of Spain. It is clear that Russian and Chinese communism represent a strong challenge to the international power and ideals of the United States. But there never was the slightest danger of a powerful Lutheran movement within Spain and there never has been the slightest danger of a powerful communist movement within the United States. In a sense this latter truth was recognized by the purgers themselves when they concentrated their best efforts on the

"fellow travelers" and independents, in Spain, the Erasmists, in the United States, Popular Front liberals, democratic Marxists, opponents of Franco or of Chiang Kai-shek. In each situation, a change in the international situation meant that ideas which were merely unorthodox in an earlier context became suspect of heresy (disloyalty) later. After the Lutheran revolution, the battle of Mohacs, and the sack of Rome, Erasmism in Spain became tainted as heresy. After the breakdown of the World War II alliance between Russia and the West, all Marxist associations and ideas became evidence of disloyalty.

The momentum of such purges always favors the extremists. In Spain, an Erasmist Inquisitor General found himself unable to control his investigators and an Erasmist Cardinal of Toledo was unable to mitigate the fate of his secretary. Once the purge began, the conservative, isolationist Old Christian friars were in the driver's seat. Similarly, at the first Lattimore hearings in 1950, the mildly liberal chairman, Senator Tydings, could not control the extremist Senators McCarthy and Hickenlooper. The prominent victims in each purge learned only through bitter experience how utterly irrational were the beliefs of their accusers. Juan de Vergara thought at first that it would be easy to dispose of his own case because the Inquisition could not possibly take seriously the charge that he was personally responsible for the failure of the theological congress of 1527 to condemn Erasmus. Similarly Owen Lattimore thought at first that the fantastic nature of the accusation that he was the chief architect of American Far Eastern policy would mean a quick disposition of his case. As the American purge developed, extremist tendencies were further aggravated by the multiplicity of purging organizations. The several congressional and governmental committees competed for credit in executing the purge. So excellent a public servant as John Stewart Service

was jettisoned by a liberal Secretary of State who had to prove the strength of his own anti-communism.

The ethics of democratic capitalism were sorely tested in the purge of the entertainment industry. When actress Marsha Hunt was listed in *Red Channels* for joining several committees protesting the Hollywood purge, she became virtually unemployable. In the course of the following five years, she found a few producers who were personally satisfied with her numerous voluntary statements concerning her political past and who offered her work. But she discovered that even the strongest affirmations that she had never been a communist were insufficient for certain groups which threatened to boycott any picture she might make. Her employers pressed her to issue a further statement that she had been guilty of bad judgment in her activities. She refused to do so unless they could convince her that her acts had in fact furthered the cause of communism. She continued to be black-listed.

In 1532, a fate comparable to Miss Hunt's was suffered by Maria Cazalla, sister of a recently deceased bishop of Erasmist sympathies. During thirty-two months of imprisonment, under repeated questioning and occasional torture, she steadily acknowledged her admiration of Erasmus and just as steadily resisted the tribunal's efforts to make her confess that in effect she had encouraged heresy. Ultimately her judges saved face by finding her guilty only of a "slight suspicion" of heresy. She was spared a public *auto da fe* but was obliged to offer penitence in her own parish church and to avoid all future association with suspected heretics. In Spain, the price of integrity was long imprisonment despite the respect that Maria Cazalla won from her judges. In the United States, the price of integrity was the loss of profession despite the respect and conditional goodwill of Miss Hunt's employers, conditional because the entertainment industries exist to en-

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tertain and to make money, not to risk boycott on a matter of principle.

One of the most pitiable aspects of each purge was the effort of honorable and sensitive men to placate their tormentors by humiliating themselves. Numerous were the Erasmists and mystics who claimed that they had been foolish, vile, or misguided ever to have held their heterodox or heretical beliefs. In 1954 the hearing board of The Atomic Energy Commission and the reading public were puzzled by the ambivalent attitude of J. Robert Oppenheimer towards his beliefs and associations of the late thirties. On the one hand, he defended his attitudes as justified at the time. On the other hand, he emphasized his naïveté and carelessness rather than his idealism, and at one time referred to his interest in the Spanish republican refugees as "idiotic." The Erasmists, writhing under the merciless examination of their every thought and impulse, would have understood the Oppenheimer who impatiently called his best self an idiot.

Since no crimes were alleged in either purge and since it was difficult to justify persecution solely on the ground of ideas, character assassination became a major objective. The investigations of the Erasmists dwelt frequently on the Bohemian ways of the *beatas* and their young men friends. During the investigations of the State Department, Americans heard much innuendo about homosexuality. Spaniards were questioned at length about long-past conversations with persons later alleged to be Lutherans. Similar questioning filled hundreds of pages of the Lattimore and Oppenheimer hearings. The intent in such instances was to go over the same ground repeatedly, searching for ways to force an inconsistency, an exaggeration, an evasion, a verbal confusion under pressure such that the basis could be found for a perjury indictment—or at the very least, to leave the impression that the witness was not as honest as men should be. The suspicion of a man's every thought also explains the intermin-

able exegesis of Erasmus' writings in Spain and of Marxist literature in the United States.

The lines of support and opposition for such purges seem also to be comparable. In neither case did the general public take the initiative. But the mass of people are always somewhat suspicious (and perhaps jealous) of intellectuals. They desire conformity in order to go about their business undisturbed. They tolerate deviations as long as these do not appear seriously to threaten their own ideals and expectations. But if it once appears that unorthodox ideas are connected in some mysterious, hence conspiratorial, fashion with a threat to conventional standards, they are ready to support, and for short periods even incite, a purge of the unorthodox. In Spain the Inquisition issued Edicts of Faith describing characteristics whereby one would recognize an illuminist, a Lutheran, or a judaizer. This method could not be used to identify the Erasmists because officially there was nothing heretical about Erasmus. The Erasmists were to be trapped as "fellow travelers" of the actual heretics. The people cooperated, sometimes with embarrassing persistence, so that the task of a scrupulous inquisitor was often to defend simple cranks or victims of neighborhood spite. The American people have also willingly cooperated in reporting the behavior of their politically suspect neighbors. On the rare occasions when a court action or a committee leak has revealed the raw contents of an FBI dossier, it has been seen to contain much information of this type. In the 1520's, the Cortes repeatedly protested the length, the secrecy, the unnecessarily humiliating aspects of the Inquisition's methods, but not its function as the guardian of orthodoxy. Similarly, many American newspapers protested the crude methods and the circus-like character of certain congressional investigations, but very few challenged the claims of such committees to be guardians of political orthodoxy.

When the purges in the United States were actually under way, the slight organized opposition that existed was merely the opposition of a small minority more concerned with free thought and fair play than with ideological conformity. Since in Spain the overwhelming majority of the intellectuals were fervent Catholics, they could not oppose the purge in principle, but only on the grounds that in specific cases the Inquisition was mistaken or its witnesses malevolent. In the United States the centuries' long tradition of civil liberty provided the basis for a principled opposition to all pressure for ideological conformity. Justices Black and Douglas of the Supreme Court and Judge Edgerton of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals steadily reaffirmed the traditions of civil liberty whenever loyalty cases reached the high courts. But the panic fear of communism during these years was such that anyone insisting on full civil liberty had to run the risk of being considered a communist himself.

Altogether the study of the events compared in these pages leads to rather melancholy conclusions about the effects of such purges on the internal political life of each society. Whatever the alleged benefits may have been, the record shows how extremists triumph over moderates, how men of integrity are punished for that integrity or forced to betray it, how character assassination proceeds with public cooperation, how the supposed exposure of national enemies becomes in reality a purge of the unorthodox and the independent. Few students of Spain would claim that the efforts of the Inquisition to control Spanish intellectual life resulted in a net gain for that country. How many Americans would claim that our political life has become healthier, freer, more responsive to the needs of the time as a result of the recent investigations and firings? Not that we need exaggerate the practical results of the purge. Erasmism remained a deep current in Spanish thought and literature despite the efforts

of the Inquisition, and Marxism has not disappeared as an intellectual and political influence in the United States. But in each case large numbers of the most honorable individuals were the principal sufferers, and the main result was the creation of an atmosphere of accusation and timidity.

## HUMANIST LEARNING IN THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE\*

*Paul Oskar Kristeller*

### I

THE INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENT which I shall try to describe in this paper has been quite often ignored, minimized, or misunderstood in recent historical discussions. Yet the classical humanism of the Italian Renaissance can be shown to be a very significant phenomenon in the history of Western civilization. It represents a new and very important phase in the transmission, study, and interpretation of the heritage of classical antiquity, which has always played a unique role in Western cultural history. Under the influence of classical models, Renaissance humanism brought about a profound transformation of literature, first of Neo-Latin literature, and second of the various vernacular or national literatures, affecting their content as well as their literary form and style. In the area of philosophical thought, which happens to be my special field of interest, Renaissance humanism was less important for the originality of its ideas than for the fermenting effect it had upon older patterns of thought. It restated many ancient ideas that had not been seriously considered hitherto and brought to the fore a number of favorite and partly novel problems, and, in so doing, altered profoundly the form and style of philosophical thinking, teaching, and writing. Finally, although the movement was in its origin literary and scholarly, it came to affect, through the fashionable prestige that

\* This paper is based on a lecture given at Syracuse University on March 18, 1959.

accompanied the claims as well as the achievements of its representatives, all other areas of Renaissance civilization, in Italy as well as elsewhere: its art and music, its science and theology, and even its legal and political theory and practice.

Before entering further into this subject, it seems necessary to clear up some ambiguities in the terms which I am going to use, especially in the terms "Renaissance" and "Humanism." The term "Renaissance" has given rise to an unending debate among the historians of the last hundred years or so, and there has been a great variety of opinions concerning the significance and characteristics of this historical period, its relation to the periods preceding and following it, and the precise time of its beginning and of its end. Depending upon one's views, the Renaissance would seem to have lasted as much as four hundred years, or only 27 years, not counting the view of those scholars who think that the Renaissance did not exist at all. As we may see from Professor Ferguson's and Professor Weisinger's studies, attempts to define and to evaluate the meaning of the period have been so numerous and inconclusive that we might be tempted to fall back on the kind of definition that is sometimes offered in other fields as a sign of despair, and define the Renaissance as that historical period of which Renaissance historians are talking. I am not seriously satisfied with this definition, and rather prefer to define the Renaissance as that historical period which understood itself as a Renaissance or rebirth of letters and of learning, whether the reality conformed to this claim or not. Yet I think it is still safer to avoid even this questionable commitment, and to identify the Renaissance with the historical period that extends roughly from 1300 to 1600 A.D. and that has been conventionally designated by that name. This is at least the sense in which I shall employ the term.

The term "Italy," I am happy to say, is not subject to the same kind of ambiguity, yet the role of Italy during the Renaissance period has been the subject of a heated scholarly

controversy which is closely connected with the problem of the Renaissance itself. According to Jacob Burckhardt's famous book, whose centenary we are going to celebrate this year, Italy occupied a special position of cultural leadership during the Renaissance period, and many characteristic features of Renaissance civilization appeared in the other European countries much later than in Italy, and as a direct result of Italian influence. This view has been challenged by many historians who are partial to one of the other countries, and they have succeeded in showing that the Renaissance assumed in each country a peculiar physiognomy that differentiates it from the Renaissance in Italy and that reflects the native background and traditions of each country concerned. Although I am quite prepared to grant that much, I am inclined to endorse the core of Burckhardt's view, and to defend the statement that a number of important cultural developments of the Renaissance originated in Italy and spread to the rest of Europe through Italian influence. The evidence for this statement is overwhelming in the visual arts, and it is equally striking in Renaissance humanism.

The term "humanism," however, is itself no less subject to ambiguities and controversies than the term "Renaissance." In present day discussions, the term "humanism" is widely and rather vaguely used to indicate some kind of emphasis on human values, whether this emphasis is said to be religious or antireligious, scientific or antiscientific. In this sense I suppose everybody likes to be a humanist, or to appear as one, and the term ceases to be very distinctive. In speaking of Renaissance humanism, however, I am not referring at all to humanism in the modern sense of an emphasis on human values; I am restricting the term to a meaning that seems to be much closer to what the Renaissance itself understood by a humanist. For although the word "humanism" as applied to the Renaissance emphasis on classical scholarship and on classical education originated among German scholars and

educators early in the 19th century, it developed from the term "humanist," which had been used ever since the late 15th century in a specific sense and which originated probably in the slang of the Italian university students of that time: a humanist was a professor or student of the *studia humanitatis*, of the humanities—as distinct from a jurist, for example. And the *studia humanitatis*, although the term was borrowed from ancient authors and was consciously adopted for a programmatic stress on the human and educational values of the studies thus designated, had stood ever since the early 15th century for a well defined cycle of teaching subjects listed as grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy, all of them to be based on the reading of the classical Greek and Latin authors.

To put it more broadly, even though the civilization of Renaissance Italy may show a unity of style in all its aspects, this civilization—like that of the later Middle Ages—is clearly articulated and compartmentalized in its various cultural and professional sectors. I do not believe that this rich structure is reducible to a few political or economic or religious factors, but, allowing for all kinds of personal combinations and mutual influences, there is within each cultural sector a core of autonomous tradition and development. It seems important to realize that Renaissance humanism is bound up with the professional tradition of one particular sector, namely the *studia humanitatis*. This is its center of operation, from which it was able to act upon the other areas of the intellectual life of the period. There is a touch of humanism in the modern sense also in Renaissance humanism, in so far as the term *studia humanitatis* indicates an emphasis on man and his values, and for this reason the dignity of man was a favorite theme with some, although by no means with all, Renaissance humanists. Yet we should always keep in mind that there was for all of them only one means through which these human values and ideals could be attained:

through classical and literary—that is, through humanistic—studies.

This professional place of the *studia humanitatis* in Renaissance Italy helps us to understand their medieval antecedents. These are not to be found in the scholastic philosophy or theology of the 13th century, which continued to flourish through the Renaissance period, in Italy as elsewhere, but operated, as it were, in a different department of learning. So far as I can see, there were three medieval phenomena which contributed to the rise of Renaissance humanism, but which underwent a thorough transformation through their very combination, if for no other reason. One was the formal rhetoric or *ars dictaminis* which had flourished in medieval Italy as a technique of composing letters, documents, and public orations, and as a training for the class of chancellors and secretaries who composed such letters and documents for popes, emperors, bishops, princes, and city republics. The second medieval influence on Renaissance humanism was the study of Latin grammar as it had been cultivated in the medieval schools, and especially in the French schools, where this study had been combined with the reading of classical Latin poets and prose writers. This influence was felt in Italy towards the very end of the 13th century, when the study and imitation of classical Latin authors came to be considered as the prerequisite for the elegant composition of those letters and speeches which the professional rhetorician was supposed to write. The third medieval antecedent of Renaissance humanism leads us away from the traditions of the Latin West to those of the Byzantine East. For the study of classical Greek literature, while practically unknown in Western Europe, with the possible exception of the Greek speaking sections of Southern Italy and Sicily, was more or less continuously pursued in medieval Constantinople. When the Italian humanists towards the very end of the 14th century began to add the study of classical Greek language and literature to that of

Latin literature and of formal rhetoric, they became the pupils of Byzantine scholarship and traditions. This fact has been long recognized, but it still remains to be studied in some of its aspects.

When Italian humanism had developed from these contributing factors into its full stature, in the 15th and 16th centuries, we find it associated mainly with two professions. The humanists represent the class of professional teachers of the humanistic disciplines, at the universities as well as in the secondary schools; they represent also the class of the professional chancellors and secretaries who knew how to compose the documents, letters, and orations required by their posts. Although the humanists at the universities had to compete with teachers of philosophy, theology, jurisprudence, medicine, and mathematics, the humanists came to dominate the secondary schools because they supplied most of the subject matter. Hence they were able to exercise a formative influence on entire generations of educated people, some of whom took an active part in humanist learning and writing without ever becoming professional humanist teachers or chancellors. These included princes and statesmen, churchmen and businessmen, and even artists, poets, philosophers, theologians, jurists, and physicians. By the middle of the 15th century, the influence of humanism penetrated into all areas of Italian civilization; and during the 16th century it began to be felt in all other European countries.

## II

If we want to get an idea of the achievement of Italian humanism, we must first try to survey its literary and scholarly contributions, a large mass of material still embodied in manuscripts and early editions that defies any attempt to describe it, not merely because one paper, or even one volume, would not be sufficient, but also because a large part of this material has been very imperfectly explored so far.

Let me begin with the contributions of the humanists to classical scholarship. Whereas a sizable core of classical Latin literature had been known to the Middle Ages, the Italian humanists extended the knowledge of this literature almost to its present limits by discovering manuscripts of a number of authors and works that had been almost forgotten during the preceding period. To emphasize the importance of this contribution, it is enough to refer to the manuscript discoveries of Poggio Bracciolini, and to mention some of the more important authors or texts thus rediscovered for the reading public: Lucretius, Tacitus, and some of the orations and dialogues of Cicero. No less important were the contributions of the humanists to the study and diffusion of those Latin authors and writings that had been available during the medieval centuries. The number of humanist copies of these Latin classical texts is very large indeed, and this in itself shows how the rise of classical studies during the Renaissance period helped to spread such texts. Not only were there numerous 15th-century copies of classical Latin authors; the average library in the Renaissance contained more classical Latin texts, in proportion to religious or medieval or even contemporary literature, than it had in previous centuries.

This wide diffusion of classical texts reached new proportions after the introduction of printing, when we find a very large number and proportion of editions of the classics, due to the efforts of humanist editors and sometimes of humanist printers. The work done by the humanists on these texts was not limited to mechanical copying. They developed a keen sense of the correctness of classical Latin grammar and style. They also developed a successful method of textual criticism: by comparing the texts of several old manuscripts and by emending the texts, they eliminated errors found in the manuscripts. Furthermore, the humanists were engaged in understanding and explaining the difficult passages of the

classical authors. They produced a large literature of commentaries that grew out of their class lectures, and in doing so, they not only continued the work of the medieval grammarians, but also expanded and improved it very greatly. In all this, the humanists were the direct forerunners of modern classical scholarship. In their double concern with studying and imitating classical Latin literature, and in direct connection with their activity as teachers, the humanists were careful students of the classical Latin language and vocabulary, of its orthography, grammar, metrics, and prosody, as well as of its style and literary genres. In order to understand the content of ancient literature and to apply it for their own purposes, they investigated ancient history and mythology, ancient customs and institutions. And in their effort to take into account all evidence for the study of ancient civilization, they paid attention to inscriptions and coins, cameos and statues; they began to develop such auxiliary disciplines as epigraphy, numismatics, and archaeology.

The field of Greek scholarship required a still greater effort, since it had no antecedents to speak of in the Latin West, and since even during the Renaissance period the number of good Greek scholars was considerably smaller than that of Latin scholars. Here the Italian humanists share with their Byzantine teachers and contemporaries the merit of having brought to Western libraries the large body of Greek manuscripts in which the texts of ancient Greek literature were preserved, at the very time the Byzantine Empire was being threatened and finally destroyed by the Turkish conquest. Renaissance scholars did for classical Greek writers what they had done for the Roman writers: copying, printing, editing, and expounding them, and studying the grammar, style, and subject matter of those authors. They also did something that is not sufficiently well known or appreciated in its great historical importance, that is, they gradually translated into Latin the entire body of classical Greek literature.

The task becomes even more impressive when we realize that Greek was understood or mastered by only a few scholars, whereas, throughout the Renaissance period, Latin remained the language commonly read and written by scholars all over Western Europe. By 1600 the humanist translators had given Western readers the entire range of ancient Greek literature.

The extent of Greek literature available in Latin to medieval Western readers was much more limited. It comprised a certain number of philosophical, theological, and scientific writings, but it failed to include any poetry, historiography, or oratory. As a result of the translating activity of the Renaissance humanists, a large body of ancient Greek writings became available in the West for the first time: all the poets, including Homer and the tragedians; all the historians, including Herodotus and Thucydides; and all the orators, including Isocrates and Demosthenes. Even in the areas where Greek texts had been available in the Middle Ages, many more were now made accessible: not only Aristotle and Proclus and a little Plato, but all of Plato and Plotinus and Epicurus and Epictetus and Sextus Empiricus; not only some, but all Greek writers on medicine, mathematics, and astronomy; and all Greek patristic writers. This was a thorough change in the reading material of the average scholar, and its effects were bound to be felt in literature as well as in philosophy, theology, and the sciences.

### III

Let us pass from the scholarly work of the Italian humanists to their original literary productions, which were thoroughly influenced by their scholarship and by their endeavor to imitate the models of the classics in all types of writing. I should like to explain at this point that most of the original writing of the humanists was done in Latin, so that they were able to imitate classical Latin models in the same linguistic medium. However, many humanists also wrote part of their

works in the Italian vernacular, and even those writers who used only the vernacular and could not be classified as humanist scholars were in many ways influenced by the humanist scholarship and writing of their time.

A very large portion of the literary production of the humanists consists in their letters. The composition of state letters was, of course, a part of their professional activity. As chancellors and secretaries, they were the paid ghost writers of princes and city governments, and the state letters, manifestoes, and other political documents then as now served to express and to spread the interests, ideology, and propaganda of each government, and sometimes to accompany the war of the swords with a war of the pens. Consequently, the state letters of the humanists are valuable documents for the political thought of the period, provided that we take into account the particular circumstances under which these documents were written, and do not take every statement at its face value as the expression of the personal convictions of the writer. The private letters of the humanists constitute an even larger body of material that has not yet been sufficiently explored. The private letter was not merely a vehicle of personal communication; it was intended from the beginning as a literary composition to be copied and read. The humanist letter-writers consciously imitated the classical example of Cicero or Seneca, and they wrote and collected and published their letters with the purpose of having them serve as models for their pupils and successors. Moreover, the letter served some of the functions of the newspaper at a time when there was no press and when communications were slow and uncertain. Finally, the letter was a favored substitute for a short treatise of scholarly or literary or philosophical content, favored because the humanists liked to speak of their experiences and opinions in a personal and subjective fashion, in the first person. In other words, the letter, being more personal than

the treatise, performed the functions of the essay, and actually was its literary forerunner.

Another very large literary genre which was cultivated by the humanists in their speeches as in other compositions liked professional activity was the speech or oration. It is true that the humanists in their speeches as in other compositions liked to imitate classical models. Yet we should add that Renaissance Italy inherited from medieval Italy a variety of occasions for speechmaking that were not at all comparable with the examples of ancient oratory but were rooted instead in medieval customs and institutions. Consequently, there is a real flood of humanist speeches, and although many of these ephemeral products must have perished with the occasion that gave rise to them, a surprisingly large number of such speeches has come down to us. Many of them were obviously composed with care and with the intention and ambition to serve as models for pupils and followers. The humanists evidently were commissioned to write the speeches demanded by the occasion. There were many funeral speeches which usually tell us more about the life and person of the deceased than any funeral sermon I have heard in my life. There were wedding speeches, apparently a literary development from the formula of contract demanded by Lombard law. A number of speeches grew out of the ceremonies of schools and universities: commencement speeches in praise of studies or of particular disciplines; opening speeches at the beginning of a course of lectures, or of a public dispute (Pico's famous oration belongs to this latter type); graduation speeches given by both professors and students; and on many other academic occasions. Another large body of speeches was connected with the political life of the time, or at least with its ceremonial side: there were speeches made by ambassadors to the princes or governments to which they had been sent, and especially to a newly elected pope; speeches of welcome for a distinguished foreign visitor; and speeches

addressed to newly elected bishops or governors or magistrates, with the appropriate replies. Much rarer, though not entirely lacking, are the speeches of the types to which belong the most famous masterpieces of ancient oratory: political speeches held during the deliberations of a council or public assembly, or forensic speeches given at a public trial or lawsuit before a law court. In other words, the humanist speech was seldom connected with occasions of political or legal importance but was more often composed for decorative purposes. It was clearly considered a kind of public entertainment, and it competed on many occasions with a musical or dramatic performance. Many humanist speeches were evidently much admired by their contemporaries, and though it is customary among historians to dismiss them as empty oratory, I must confess that I have read many of them with pleasure and found them to be well written, as well as interesting for their ideas and historical information.

Another large body of the writings of the humanists consists of their historiography. One might expect that this was largely due to their scholarly interest, and that they consequently concentrated their efforts on ancient history. However, this is true only for a small part of their historical production. In most instances, the historical works of the humanists were connected with their professional activity, in so far as the chancellor or secretary of a prince or of a city was expected to serve also as their historian. The type of the paid court or city historiographer whom we encounter occasionally also in medieval Italy becomes a common type during the Italian Renaissance. Consequently, most of the historical works of the humanists are histories of cities or countries or ruling families, and, for obvious reasons, they usually concentrated on the Middle Ages and their own times rather than on classical antiquity. Thus we find humanist histories of Florence and of Venice, of the Popes, of the Dukes of Milan, or of the Gonzaga family; and by the second half

of the 15th century, Italian humanists began to be employed as official historiographers by the Kings of Hungary, Poland, Spain, England, and France, as well as by the German emperors.

The humanist works on history have a number of peculiarities, both good and bad. They are often written in a highly rhetorical Latin, and they show the influence of classical historiography in the use of fictitious speeches. Since they were usually commissioned by the very state or city whose history was to be written, there is an element of eulogy and of regional or dynastic bias, something which I understand is not entirely absent from the national histories of modern times. On the other hand, the humanists usually did not place much credence in miracles and avoided theological speculations, and they tend to account for historical events on a strictly rational basis. Moreover, they often had access to the archives and original documents illustrating the subject matter of their history, and employed more exacting standards of documentation and historical criticism than had been the custom during the preceding centuries. Valla's treatise on the Donation of Constantine is a famous example of historical criticism in the 15th century; in the 16th, we might single out humanists such as Sagonius, who must be considered in their erudition and critical acumen as the direct forerunners of the great historians of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Another branch of historical literature that was very much cultivated by the humanists was biography. There was the model of Plutarch and of other ancient writers, but there obviously was a great contemporary demand for biographies, not merely of princes or saints, but also of statesmen and distinguished citizens, of poets and artists, of scholars and businessmen. Like the portrait painting of the time, the biographical literature reflects the so-called individualism of the period, that is, the importance attached to personal ex-

periences, opinions, and achievements, and the eagerness to see them perpetuated in a distinguished work of art or of literature.

There are other types of humanist prose composition which we might connect with their activity as orators rather than as historians, and which we can mention merely in passing, although they constitute a fairly large and famous part of their production. One task of the orator was traditionally defined as that of praising and blaming, and this task was taken rather literally in the Renaissance. There were many political invectives written in the name of a government against its enemies, and numerous personal invectives composed by humanists against their rivals. They are full of nasty remarks which were probably not taken as seriously by contemporary readers as they are sometimes by modern scholars, but which show the humanists' love of gossip. This is another aspect of Renaissance "individualism," and though the love of gossip is not peculiar to that period alone, the inclination to incorporate it in published and even in highbrow literature definitely is. At the other end stands the literature of praise, the numerous eulogies of princes and of cities, sometimes most useful for biographical or descriptive details, as well as the eulogies of various arts and sciences, usually comparing them favorably with some of their rival disciplines. Also the descriptions of festivals were quite in vogue, and we have charming descriptions of tournaments or of snowball fights in Latin prose which seem to compete more or less purposely with similar descriptions written in verse or in Italian. Humanist prose literature also rivaled the vernacular by borrowing from it the narrative form of the short story, the Novella, sometimes translating such stories from Italian into Latin and sometimes composing original stories in Latin, some of which attained a tremendous popularity. Finally, humanist prose also assumed a lighter and more humorous garb in the

collections of anecdotes and of facetious stories that have come down to us from the Renaissance period.

The humanists thought of themselves as orators and poets, and the crowning of poets was a favorite humanist ceremony and honor. Their notion of poetry was far removed from the modern romantic notion of the creative poet. For them, poetry was largely the ability to write verse, especially Latin verse. This was something that could be taught and learned, at least to some extent. They also were convinced that any literary form or subject could be treated in verse as well as in prose, in Latin as well as in the vernacular, and they tolerated as poetry a good deal that by more severe modern standards is rather mediocre. Moreover, the study and interpretation of ancient poets was considered as a part of the business of poetry, since the composing of verse depended on a knowledge and imitation of the classical poets. All this may explain why a very large proportion indeed of humanist literature belongs to the category of poetry broadly understood. In this vast body of material, dramatic pieces constitute a relatively small part, but this small group of material does have its historical importance. Some of the humanist plays were widely known, and in the 15th century, classical and humanist Latin plays were repeatedly performed in schools and courts. This was undoubtedly one of the factors leading to the rise of dramatic literature in the 16th century. Also the eclogue or pastoral poem had a number of cultivators, after the model of Vergil and other ancients, and when this type of poetry was transferred to the vernacular and given a more dramatic turn, the ground was laid for the tremendous vogue of pastoral poetry which lasted down to the 18th century. Humanist poetry includes specimens of the satire and of the ode, although the latter tended to be rare on account of its metrical difficulties which but a few consummate writers could master. Much larger is the volume of epic poetry. It includes verse translations of Homer and other Greek poets, and even of

Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The bulk of the compositions may be characterized as historical, mythological, and didactic, and this corresponded to the available classical models. There are long poems on ancient history, such as Petrarch's *Africa*, on contemporary wars, in praise of princes and cities, and in praise of Columbus' discoveries. Various ancient myths were made the subject of long epic poems, and some humanists even dared to write a supplement to Vergil's *Aeneid*. An effort was also made to apply the form of classical epics to Christian subjects, and there are a number of famous poems dealing with the life of Christ or of the saints. Finally, there are didactic poems on a variety of subjects such as astronomy or astrology, on poetics and natural history, on the silk worm, and on the game of chess, to cite only a few of the better known examples.

Yet by far the largest part of humanist poetry takes the form of elegies and epigrams, two types of poetry which are closely related to each other through their metrical form and which are comparatively easy to handle. The elegy is the longer of the two and is more serious in content; most frequently, it describes the poet's love for a beautiful girl in a variety of its phases and episodes. There are a number of scattered elegies which were quite popular, but many of the greater and smaller humanist poets tried to establish their fame by entire cycles of elegies collected in books, after the model of Ovid, Propertius, or Tibullus. Some elegies belong to the very best specimens of humanist poetry, and famous poets such as Pontano or Poliziano excelled especially in this genre.

Much more numerous and common than the elegy is the related form of the epigram. It was the favorite form of humanist poetry, being shorter and less serious than the elegy, and allowing a much greater variety of content and tone. A large number of humanist writers have left us collections of epigrams. Some of them are skillful in their formal elegance

and in the variety of the subjects treated. They include a good number of frivolous and indecent pieces, for which the Greek Anthology and Martial offered ample precedents. Aside from that, the chief attraction of even the more modest collections is historical: many of them are addressed to persons and contain historical, biographical, or literary allusions that are often a welcome addition to the scanty documentary evidence which we might otherwise possess. There was a mass production of occasional epigrams, and especially of epitaphs, which is likewise uneven in its literary merit, but again usually of historical interest. There were also poetical contests on specific occasions such as tournaments, and especially on the death of a famous or of a beautiful young person, and the 15th century saw the rise of the poetical miscellany, a collection of verses by different poets on the wedding or death of a particular person, a type that was to continue for centuries in various countries. After their appearance in Petrarch's time, epigrams in praise of the works of a friend continued to be popular; these laudatory verses were added as a kind of preface to the friend's manuscripts or editions.

#### IV

I hope this very short survey will give at least a glimpse of the amazing bulk and variety of humanist Latin poetry, and will thus make it clear that this production was bound to have its repercussions also in the vernacular literatures of the same period, in style and form as well as in subject matter, especially since many of the leading vernacular poets both in Italy and elsewhere had enjoyed a humanist training and sometimes even wrote and composed in both Latin and their native vernacular. The view that Latin and vernacular literature represented in the Renaissance a kind of hostile and mutually exclusive camps has been much cherished by many literary historians since the times of Romanticism, and it has combined with the ignorance of Latin in causing much con-

tempt for and neglect of humanist Latin literature, but this view does not correspond to the historical facts as they are now known to us.

I now come to the last branch of humanist literature, which to the student of philosophy and of intellectual history is by far the most important, and which to be sure has much intrinsic significance, but which represents only a comparatively small sector of humanist writings: the dialogues and treatises dealing with moral and other philosophical subjects. Moral philosophy was clearly a part of the province of the humanists; Petrarch liked to be called a moral philosopher, and many humanist scholars taught the subject in various schools and universities. Actually, the moral treatises of the humanists are a very important source if we want to understand the interests, the taste, and sometimes the wisdom of the time. They also help us to know the opinions of particular humanists on particular questions. Yet I cannot agree with some of my fellow students of the history of philosophy who try to reconstruct from the humanist treatises a body of uniform philosophical opinion that would be common to all humanists and in this way to distinguish them from the philosophers of other times. I cannot help feeling that for every opinion that we find expressed by a humanist in one of his writings, we can find different or even opposite opinions on the same matter expressed by other humanists or even by the same humanist in another part of his work. In each instance, we must carefully consider the particular purpose for which a given work was written, the numerous citations taken from classical authors (citations that very often are not even explicitly identified), and, finally, the concern for formal literary elegance and the conscious avoidance of technical language, an avoidance that reflected the authors' imitation of Cicero. In many instances, although not in all, the humanists are more interested in airing and discussing several possible opinions on a given issue than in taking a firm stand on

one side or the other. Yet despite all this, the humanists clearly show a marked interest in some special problems, and most of them show a preference for one rather than another of the possible views on that problem. The humanists wrote a number of treatises on happiness or the supreme good, the standard topic of ancient moral philosophy, and they would more frequently side with Aristotle's moderate view than with the extreme positions of the Stoics or Epicureans, although the latter also had their distinguished adherents. They would discuss particular virtues, or the power of fortune, usually insisting that human reason can overcome fortune, at least within certain limits. They wrote a good deal on education, and defended the reading of the classics on both moral and intellectual grounds. A favorite subject was nobility, and as its chief cause they would favor merit more often than birth. They would variously discuss the merits of the active and contemplative life, the married and the single life. They would discuss the duties of a particular profession, including that of the monk or cleric. They would write about the family and the state, adapting ancient precepts from various sources to the peculiar circumstances of their own time and country. They would discuss the relative merits of a republic and a monarchy, and many of them would praise the virtues of republican government, especially if they happened to write in Florence or Venice. They would discuss the merits of law and medicine, of literature and of military service, of ancient and modern times. Much of this is interesting, if not profound, and a good deal more could be learned by studying the unexplored and unpublished part of this literature. Yet at the present state of my knowledge, I should still maintain that the contribution of the Italian humanists does not lie in any particular opinions which all of them would have defended, or in any particularly strong arguments they might have offered for such opinions.

Their contribution is much more intangible and indirect.

It lies in the educational program which they set forth and carried through, that is, in the thorough propagation of classical learning through the schools, and in the emphasis on man and his dignity which was implicit in the slogan of the *studia humanitatis*, and which was defended explicitly by many, if not all, of the humanists. It lies in the conviction, perhaps erroneous, that through this study and imitation of the classics they had brought about a renaissance, a rebirth, of learning and literature, of the arts and sciences, that led mankind back to the heights of classical antiquity after a long period of decay. This historical view has been much opposed by modern students of the Middle Ages, but it still underlies our customary division of the periods of history. It lies in the elegant and non-technical discussion of concrete human problems which were of general interest to the educated readers of the time but which were neglected by the technical philosophers, the scholastic logicians, and physicists. It lies, above all, in the vast amount of fresh ancient source material supplied to the students of philosophy; this made it possible for them to restate the ancient doctrines of Platonism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Scepticism, to restate even Aristotelianism on the basis of Greek rather than Arabic or medieval sources, and finally to attempt new philosophical solutions independent of any particular ancient sources. All this was to characterize the philosophical thought of the Renaissance period. I am not prepared to consider this as a part of humanism since this involved many traditions and problems of a different origin, but it surely was influenced by humanism, and would not have been possible without the work and the attitudes of the humanists.

What I said about the impact of Italian humanism upon philosophy may be said with the appropriate modifications for all other branches of Renaissance civilization. Most Italian humanists were not theologians (and some of them may have been indifferent Christians, although very few, if any, can

be proven to have been pagans). Yet some of them preceded Erasmus and the Reformers in applying the tools of classical scholarship to Christian texts and in preparing the way for a kind of sacred philology. There were many new editions and translations of the Church Fathers, and even some of the Bible, and the methods of textual and historical criticism were consciously and conscientiously used for them. The humanist insistence on ancient primary sources and their distrust and critique of scholastic dialectic were to have their repercussions in theology no less than in philosophy. In the history of the sciences, the merits and achievements of the later Middle Ages have been rightly emphasized by recent historians. Yet, although the Middle Ages possessed a significant selection of Greek writings on mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, the humanist translators added important texts in these fields as well as in geography. Most of the humanists were not professional scientists, but many scientists of the 15th and 16th centuries had enjoyed a humanist education, and it was only at that time that the results of the Greeks were fully absorbed so that the road was cleared for entirely new discoveries. In jurisprudence, it was humanist scholarship that led to a historical understanding of the sources of Roman law during the 16th century, just as the humanist translations of ancient philosophical, historical, and rhetorical literature refreshed the discussion of political theory. In architecture and the decorative arts, the prevalent classicism of the age led to a revival of ancient forms and styles, while the revived interest in classical history, mythology, and allegory enriched the subject matter of painting and of sculpture for many centuries to come, down to the 19th. Even in music, where no ancient specimens had been preserved, the study and even the misinterpretation of classical theory had an important effect on its development during the later 16th century. In other words, Italian humanism was essentially at home in one particular compartment of Renaissance civilization, but its influence

gradually spread from this center and affected all other areas.

Moreover, its influence was not limited to Italy alone, but its traces can be found all over Europe, for better or worse, at least after the middle of the 15th century. Students from all European countries attended the Italian universities, were exposed to the methods and sources of Italian humanism, and went home with many new ideas and tastes as well as with many books which they had copied or acquired and which are still to be found in Northern, Western, or Eastern libraries. These same texts were copied and read and later printed outside of Italy, some of them more widely than at home. Many Italian humanists had occasion to go abroad and to spread their interests through their personal and professional associations, if not through their teaching; they went as ambassadors of Italian governments, or as political and later religious exiles, or as chancellors or professors in the service of the foreign governments. The exchange of books and of persons then as now was an important factor in cultural communication, and at that time, Italian humanism had much to offer that was unknown and neglected in the other countries. In the 16th century, humanism became less dependent on Italy and put down native roots in the other countries. Scholars like Erasmus and More, Vives and Budé, were equal or superior to their Italian contemporaries and were often unwilling to acknowledge their debt to their Italian predecessors; but while they surely owed a great deal to their native traditions as well as to their own personal talent, yet from our perspective we cannot possibly deny that they were continuing and developing the traditions of Italian humanism, and that their work, novel and original as it may be, would not have been possible without that of their Italian predecessors.

I hope this very brief survey of a vast area of Renaissance learning and literature may give at least a general idea of the contributions and historical significance of Italian humanism.

Some of the works of the humanists may be of questionable value, or of slight importance from the modern point of view. But I should like to stress two points. First, as a result of Renaissance humanism, the intellectual climate had completely changed between 1300 and 1600, as, for example, in philosophy, between Aquinas and Descartes. Even where the humanists did not formulate any new ideas in philosophy or the sciences, they made them possible by clearing the ground of some medieval traditions and by making available a variety of ancient sources. In the 16th century, humanism was not superseded by the Protestant and Catholic Reformation, as many historians claim, for it was not a theology, but a literary and scholarly tradition that survived in both Catholic and Protestant countries. In philosophy and the sciences, humanism was definitely superseded during the 17th century by the new developments which started with Galileo and Descartes, developments which had in part been prepared by humanism itself. Yet the works of the humanists, and those of the Renaissance thinkers influenced by humanism, were still widely read down to the 18th and early 19th century, and thus continued to nourish many secondary currents of thought and literature during that period. The ideal of humanist education dominated the secondary schools of the West at least to the beginning of this century, and it still survives in the term humanities as we use it, which denotes a residual of the *studia humanitatis*. Moreover, it is Renaissance humanism that is the ancestor of our philological, historical, and literary scholarship, just as medieval and Renaissance learning in logic, physics, mathematics, and medicine anticipates early and recent modern science.

The second and chief lesson which I should like to draw from the place of humanism in Renaissance civilization is this: in our time, the humanities are on the defensive everywhere, and we are, as it were, threatened by the bleak prospect of a world that consists only of practical life, of science, of

religion, and of an art deprived of intellectual content. By contrast, we see in the Renaissance a vast body of the humanities, that is, secular learning which partially, at least, is independent of practical life, of science, of religion, and of the arts, and which occupies a large and important place in the attention and initiative of the time, and which is in turn capable of exerting a deep and fruitful influence on all other areas of human activity. Let us hope that the humanities as we know them may survive and fulfill again a similar productive function, either now or in a not too distant future.

## THE MYSTIQUE IN HISTORY

*John T. Marcus*

### I. Myths and the Consciousness of History

"THE *mystique* MEANT DYING for the Republic; the *politique* means profiting from republicanism." With these words, Charles Péguy tried to capture in his poet's vision the essence of that passionate *élan* of the soul which he saw as the dominant factor, as the creative factor, in history. "Everything begins as *mystique*," he said, and added with the perpetual despair of the prophet "and ends as *politique*."<sup>1</sup>

Countless writers and social scientists have observed the force of visions, of myths, in history. Carl Jung writes:

We cannot doubt that the vision is a genuine, primordial experience, regardless of what reason-mongers say. The vision is not something derived or secondary, and it is not a symptom of something else. . . . In itself, it has psychic reality and this is no less real than physical reality.<sup>2</sup>

And R. M. MacIver comments:

By *myths* we mean the value-impregnated beliefs and notions that men hold, that they live by or live for. Every society is held together by a myth-system, a complex of dominating thought-forms that determines and sustains all its activities. All social relations, the very texture of human society, are myth-born and myth-sustained.<sup>3</sup>

Visions, myths, mystiques—they are one in essence; that essence is a conviction, a belief, founded on non-rational

<sup>1</sup> Charles Péguy, *Notre Jeunesse* (Paris, 1933), pp. 27, 213.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Jung, *Modern Man in Search of Soul*, translated by Cary F. Baynes (New York, 1933), pp. 186-87.

<sup>3</sup> R. M. MacIver, *The Web of Government* (New York, 1947), pp. 4-5.

principles, which acts as an ideal, as a force, in individual lives and in society.<sup>4</sup> They are symbolic expressions and a-rational objectifications of both "reality" and "truth." As MacIver says, the term myth "abjures all reference to truth or falsity;" it includes "the most penetrating philosophies of life, the most profound intimations of religion, the most subtle renditions of experience, along with the most grotesque imaginations of the most benighted savage."<sup>5</sup>

In the words of Cassirer, who has done most to observe the world of myth with the instrument of reason: "The problem is not the material content of mythology but the intensity with which it is experienced, with which it is *believed*—as only something endowed with objective reality can be believed."<sup>6</sup>

It was Georges Sorel who emphasized the power of myth to influence history by motivating human actions, a power which he believed should be used to bring about the new proletarian society. The glorious myths of revolutionary sacrifices would themselves produce the *élan* of revolutionary success. Indeed, this was to be the new metaphysics, as Sorel put it in the introduction to *Les Illusions du Progrès*: "the respect for that fundamental mystery [of history] which a superficial science presumes to ignore."<sup>7</sup> Thus, in Sorel's thought, the

<sup>4</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven, 1946), pp. 45-46. For Max Weber's discussion of the myth as a religious "calling," see *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Talcott Parsons (London, 1930), pp. 79ff.; for his discussion of myth in the form of the "mentality," or the "life-orientation," in the value-frame of a society, see *The Religion of China; Confucianism and Taoism*, translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1951), pp. 243-49; and *Ancient Judaism*, translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1952), throughout, but especially pp. 225-34, 336-55, 395-97, and 424.

<sup>5</sup> R. M. MacIver, *The Web of Government*, p. 5. See also Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society; a Framework for Political Inquiry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 117.

<sup>6</sup> E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, 3 volumes, translated by Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), II, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Pierre Angel, *Essai sur Georges Sorel (Vers un Idéalisme Constructif)*, (Paris, 1936), p. 329. See also Georges Sorel, *D'Aristote à Marx (L'Ancienne et la Nouvelle Métaphysique)*, (Paris, 1925); G. Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*,

myth is related specifically to man's consciousness of history, to the mystery of his historical sense,<sup>8</sup> inherent in the collective consciousness of the group. Without this historical knowledge, writes Carl Becker, man's "today would be aimless and his tomorrow without significance."<sup>9</sup>

The "sense of history" as Sorel saw it embodied in the historical myth of a collectivity runs parallel to, and never touches, the conception of an historical event-in-itself—*Wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*. The historical myth-event, as in MacIver's analysis, may then be in accord with the available evidence, or it may not. It is not necessarily false, nor is it necessarily "true"—all that one may say is that demonstration of its truth lies outside the sphere of empirical proof and outside the realm of ordinary history. What characterizes it as myth is the fact that it is accepted *without regard to available historical evidence*. Cassirer explains: "Myth is not only remote from this empirical reality; it is, in a sense, in flagrant contradiction to it. It seems to build up an entirely fantastic world. Nevertheless, even myth has a certain 'objective' aspect and a definite objective function."<sup>10</sup>

To the believer, the historical event and the historical myth are identical; in fact, the event *is* the myth. Thus, in Communist belief, the Revolution of 1917 has become a myth of revolutionary tradition. If we follow George Orwell's analysis which describes communism as a form of nationalism in the psychological sense,<sup>11</sup> then the following words of Max Radin

translated by T. E. Hulme and J. Roth (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950), Ch. VI; and Jean Deroo, *Le Renversement du Matérialisme Historique; L'Expérience de Georges Sorel* (Paris, n.d.).

<sup>8</sup> Richard Humphrey, *Georges Sorel, Prophet Without Honor; A Study in Anti-Intellectualism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), Introduction, Ch. VII.

<sup>9</sup> Carl Becker, *Everyman His Own Historian* (New York, 1935), pp. 235-36.

<sup>10</sup> E. Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, p. 45. Cassirer comments elsewhere that the characteristic of mythical thought is its failure to differentiate between "representation" and "real" perception (*The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, II, 36, 47).

<sup>11</sup> George Orwell, "Notes on Nationalism," in *England Your England, And Other Essays* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1953).

concerning nationalism are perfectly suited to the November Revolution:

The mythopoeic element in tradition is immediately called upon to create or to restate historical events so that they will seem to be instances of these traits. The importance of these ideals for nationalism lies in the readiness with which they can be converted into symbols that can be used to stimulate national expansion or to resist foreign aggression. Without the mechanism of tradition, that is without the transmitted judgment that certain events happened and that certain traits are admirable, it would be difficult to create a symbolic value for the traits themselves and to use them as instruments.<sup>12</sup>

From Péguy's mystique, we have moved through the vision and the myth to the consciousness of history; we have recognized the common denominator of these various concepts. We must now define this idea in relation to the general realm of mythical thought and see how the vision, the myth, and the consciousness of history are all fused in the mystique.

## II. The Nature of the Mystique

A mystique is the particular form of mythical belief which involves: 1) the incarnation of an ideal, or value-system, in specific historical myth-events; and 2) the belief that the ideal is concretely manifested in the course of history.<sup>13</sup> It is this consciousness of history—the conviction that the ideal is not only immanent in history but has been actually materialized, at least partially, in particular myth-events—which defines the mystique. Considering it from a different perspective, one may say that the mystique postulates a “meaning” in history which the event-myth symbolizes. Thus the mystique involves both the value-structure which Jung, MacIver, and Cassirer described as determinant in society, and the “presence” of

<sup>12</sup> Max Radin, “Tradition,” *The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (1942 ed.), XV, 64.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Karl Kautsky, *The Socialist Revolution*, translated by A. M. and May Wood Simons (Chicago, 1902), Pt. I.

history which Becker, Radin, Saunders, and Sorel considered. Because it sees itself concretely manifested in historical "events," the mystique is more than a moral ideal, and because it sees the alleged instance as the manifestation of a general value-system, it is more than an historical myth-event. Devoid of historical myths, an ideal would remain, as Sorel noted, a relatively powerless instrument. But when Péguy talks about the mystique of the Republic, or the mystique of *Drefusisme*, he is talking about faiths that had historical "presence." In short, the mutual incarnation of historical "reality" and of mythical ideal is the essence of the mystique.

How does this transition from myth-event to mystique come about? It is the result of the transformation of the subject of the myth—the alleged event, or the alleged nature of an event—from an occurrence specifically defined in period and place into an idea, into an accepted "truth," not limited in space or time. It is the transformation of an alleged historical occurrence into a *transcendental value*.<sup>14</sup>

It appears that the mystique is the result of a transcendentalization of the myth which makes it "break out" of the bounds of historical occurrence to become a principle free of limiting, concrete coordinates. The myth-event ceases to be a particular historical instance and becomes instead the visible "break-through" in society of the immanent truth within history. Thus the event no longer exists as a unique occurrence but as the manifestation—in fact the materialization—of the permanent historical Ideal, which by the same process becomes the historical Reality. In other words, the mystique implies a dual transfiguration: the "materialization" by an individual or group of an ideal into an historical event, and conversely the "etherealization" of an historical event into an ideal.

One must conclude that a mystique is created when in the eyes of the believer the Ideal is transmuted from abstraction

<sup>14</sup> As in St. Augustine's concept of the history of Rome.

into historical "reality," while the phenomenological substance becomes historical Myth. Thus in the Marxist mystique of Permanent Revolution, particular revolutionary episodes do not exist as independent events; they objectify the Idea of Revolution, and the latter in turn is transformed from an idea into the "reality" of an inexorable movement toward a classless society, a reality that has "presence" in the historical process.

It is obvious from this that the mystique generates a *Weltanschauung*, a rationale of history, or an explanation of order and movement which frequently takes the form of a dialectic, and that it tends to produce a teleological conception of history. It is natural, if not logically necessary, for those possessed of a mystique to conclude that the course of history must and will lead to the fulfillment of their ideal. Whether it be the historical inevitability of the Positivist's Perfectibility of Man, the Marxist's Classless Society, or of the Nazi's Thousand-Year Reich, each of these is the mark of an ideal that has become a mystique. It is only the believer in a mystique who views history as teleological. And it is this teleological approach—the conviction that history has a pattern and purpose, and is moving toward a pre-established goal—which makes of the mystique the active myth-force in history that Radin and MacIver described.

We can now summarize the essential attributes of the mystique:

1. The mystique is characterized by the dual transformation of abstraction into an assumed historical reality and of assumed historical reality into abstraction.
2. This transformation involves the incarnation of an ideal as an element in history concretely manifested in some historical occurrence.
3. These occurrences are regarded as indications that the fulfillment of the particular ideal is the goal of history itself.

4. Such a teleological view of history is to be found only in the mystique.

5. A teleological view of history presupposes the development of a particular rationale of history and of a distinct *Weltanschauung*.

6. One of the primary functions of the mystique is to provide an archetype in relation to which the particular manifestations of history are to be seen and measured.

7. The combination of historical myths, of an historical rationale, and of a teleological conception of history makes of the mystique an historical force which influences, and frequently determines, the course of history.

### III. The Role of the Mystique in History

It appears that the mystique always exists in, or creates, a dualistic world of its own: the historical event, and the transcendental value immanent in it. But we have seen that the characteristic of the mystique is precisely the fusion of these two worlds through the Sorelian myth-event. Consequently, the originally dualistic nature of the mystique is always resolved in a final monism achieved by the transfiguration of each world into the other: the ideal essence and its historical expression.

This monist conception is necessarily an Idealism, whether or not it so considers itself. It should be noted that the term Ideal is not used in the specific sense of Kant, of Berkeley, or of Hegel. Rather, it is meant here as the power of meaningful being, opposed to an empirical materialism of fragmentary meanings or ultimate lack of meaning. Thus Idealism implies certain universal, purposeful relations in which "the nature of things" is seen not as ideologically neutral or indifferent, but as committed to certain values.

Since it concerns the future, which cannot have any present "material" reality, the mystique exists only as a belief or a state of mind, an assumption of a future historical "reality."

Therefore, in the mystique, not only does the Idea have an independent "existence"; it also precedes, in time, the assumed materiality of its teleological fulfillment in history. Furthermore, the mystique postulates a rationale of history, that is to say, a pattern or law of history. This means that the pattern manifests itself in the actual relations between phenomena in history, and consequently that it cannot be a result which grows out of these phenomena. But a pattern, by definition, is a principle, or an *idea*, of order. Thus the mystique is logically forced to accept the reality of the Idea as being at least as "primary" in history as the reality of the phenomena.

This conclusion applies as much to a materialist mystique as it does to any other. Let us consider the particular materialist mystique which proclaims the universal law of history to be class conflict. It is possible, of course, to observe the existence of class conflict in history without being an idealist, but once the Marxist makes of class conflict the law of history he has inevitably moved from a materialist frame of reference to the acceptance of an *a priori* idea.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, the Marxist must accept the fact that his idea of a classless society precedes in time its actual materialization in history, assuming as he does that its fulfillment some day is inevitable. As we have seen, this precedence in time means that the Idea of the Classless Society cannot be a reflection, an *a posteriori* consequence, of the material factors but must at the very least be inherent within them. And if a pattern of history means an inherent order of relationships, then the pattern cannot be a "superstructure" upon the material phenomena of history. Were this not so, history could not be moving in any determined direction or according to any universal plan. The Marxist can escape logically from this

<sup>15</sup> K. Kautsky, *Die Materialistische Geschichtsauffassung*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1927), II, 703; also cited in Sidney Hook, *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx; A Revolutionary Interpretation* (New York, 1933), pp. 164-72. Georgii V. Plekhanov, *The Role of the Individual in History* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1950), pp. 38-49, 55-62.

dilemma only by denying one of the basic tenets of every mystique: the concept of the universality of historical movement. Indeed, once he claims the course of history to be predictable, the Marxist presupposes the continuity of a particular order of class war, or of a particular change in the order of class war, and of a specific pattern of causality, into the future, where he cannot observe them to "exist." This presupposition of the continuity of a pattern from the realm of the observable to that of the inherently unobservable can be nothing more than an empirically unsubstantiable, non-rational conviction based on a distinct value-system, a conviction which itself constitutes the essence of the mystique.

Thus all mystiques, whether we think, for example, of the rationalist idealism of the eighteenth century or of the determinist materialism of the late nineteenth and twentieth, have in common a universal explanation of history, a history that leads by a clear line of causation to a unique goal. We may conclude that the believer in a mystique sees history as the manifestation of a monist conception, and that this monism, in turn, is essentially a form of idealism.

The notion that Plato's *logos* could act as an historical force has come down, in metaphysical form, through the works of Hegel, Treitschke, and Gierke, the school which sought its historical "reality" and its transcendental essence in the spirit of the nation-group, or of the *Genossenschaft*.<sup>16</sup> In the concept of a *Genossenschaftsgeist*, we see one of the primary functions of the mystique: the provision of the group and the individual with a Sense of Identity, or, in other words, with a consciousness of the distinctiveness of their existence.

If the mystique gives meaning to the life of the individual and the group by "placing" them in history and by providing each believer with a sense of the distinctiveness of his own

<sup>16</sup> Frederick Maitland's Introduction to Otto Friedrich von Gierke, *Political Theories of the Middle Age*, translated by F. W. Maitland (Cambridge, England, 1927).

function, it also performs the opposite task, namely, that of finding unity in history and of relating the individual to a continuum in history without which there could not, of course, be any teleology or rationale. As an illustration of this we may turn to one of the dominant mystiques of our time, one which has preoccupied a distinguished company of historians and philosophers: the myth of the national state, or simply of nationalism. The historian is aware that the kaleidoscopic connotations of this term—the context of a French citizen-soldier at Valmy, a German reader of Fichte in 1810, a companion of Garibaldi in 1859, a Kiplingesque English officer taking up "the white man's burden" in India in the 1890's, a militant adherent of *L'Action Française* after the Dreyfus Case, d'Annunzio in 1919, or the strident *Hitler Jugend* in 1936—vary the meanings of nationalism so greatly as to rob the word of all discriminating function. Still, the term does convey even to the most sophisticated historian some notion of a strong attachment, in varying forms, to a collectivity which has in common at least shared historical traditions and assumed common objectives.

We see here the crucial role of the mystique: the creation of a sense of continuity and permanence, of a thread of unity, in history, giving meaning to the continuous sequence of historical moments. This the mystique accomplishes by evoking associations in the mind of the believer—Cassirer has emphasized the myth-function of words<sup>17</sup>—between the various myth-events incarnating his faith within his past tradition, his present role in life, and his conviction as to the fulfillment of his myth-world in the future.<sup>18</sup> The mystique is the link of historical consciousness between succeeding generations.

<sup>17</sup> E. Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, pp. 282-83ff. E. Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, translated by Suzanne Langer (New York, 1946), pp. 44-62.

<sup>18</sup> E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, I, 285. Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, 4 vols. (New York, 1937-1941), I, 19-21, 25. P. A. Sorokin, *Society, Culture and Personality; Their Structure and Dynamics* (New York, 1947), pp. 360-62, 555-62. H. D. Lasswell and A. Kaplan, *Power and Society*, p. 119.

Thus, through the mystique, the events in history become symbols, or sign-posts, of the teleological goal to which history itself is moving.

When events are viewed as being merely expressions of a transcendental Idea, or as indicators of an over-all direction of historical movement, then the events in themselves become insignificant. Did, for example, a "liberal" follower of Cavour in the 1860's, a "liberal" supporter of Gladstone in 1886, a Wilsonian "liberal" in 1912, and a "New Deal" liberal in the 1930's stand for mutually irreconcilable policies? Most strikingly, did they have very different notions about such a crucial issue as the proper function of government in society? What matter—these were all manifestations of the mystique of Liberalism. And this itself is but an aspect of another mystique: the Idea of Progress.<sup>19</sup>

With the idea of Progress in its various forms, we come to one of the great mystiques of Western civilization. Among the shapes in which it has appeared are: Progress through reflective reason—Rationalism; Progress through positive science—Positivism; Progress through the better functioning of the mechanism of society—Utilitarianism; Progress through natural selection—Social Darwinism; and Progress as the expression of God's Will—Liberal Christianity.<sup>20</sup>

From this it appears that one of the primary functions of the mystique is to reconcile for the believer the contradictions of historical evidence. Contradictions within the mystique, or refutations based on empirical observation, do not matter since they affect only the passing and imperfect manifestations of the mystique, not the permanent Idea itself, which alone is real.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, the mystique is impervious to criti-

<sup>19</sup> In addition to J. B. Bury's classic study, see also Wilson D. Wallis, *Culture and Progress* (New York, 1930), pp. 445-47; and John E. Boodin, *The Social Mind; Foundations of Social Philosophy* (New York, 1939), Chs. XIII and XIV.

<sup>20</sup> Duncan Forbes, *The Liberal Anglican Idea of History* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1952).

<sup>21</sup> E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, I, 85-89ff., 105-107; II, 5, 35. See also Robert S. Hartman, "Cassirer's Philosophy of Symbolic Forms," in

cism. It extracts from the perpetual change of history certain "permanent" generalizations and transmutes them from ideas subject to evaluation according to historical evidence into articles of faith.<sup>22</sup> As we have already observed, the mystique may be an expression of "truth," but such truth cannot be established in the realm of history.

To sum up, the mystiques of a group embody the character of that group. They transmit the ethos of the group to its new members and impose its personality upon them.<sup>23</sup> While they provide the group with a goal, which in turn creates both a sense of unity and a purpose,<sup>24</sup> they also furnish the individual with some conception of his place in society and with a *raison d'être*. Above all, the mystique offers, in the inherently uncertain world of empirical evidence, a conviction of certainty. The fact of inevitable change in history produces uncertainty and induces the individual to identify himself with a mystique which he views as changing in its expression but unchanging in its Essence. Thus it is the very "flow" of history which generates mystiques. And hence the existence of mystiques is not only a fact of history, it is a necessity of

Paul A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer* (Evanston, Ill., 1949), pp. 300-1ff.; and Folke Leander, "Further Problems Suggested by the Philosophy of Symbolic Forms," *loc. cit.*, p. 355. Although Max Weber uses the term "ideal type" in a special sense—that is to say, as a "model" for the social analysis—it is significant that he regards reference to such "ideal types," which are not determined by any average, or indeed by any empirically-observed cases, as methodologically essential to an understanding of society; see *The Protestant Ethic*, p. 71, and especially *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre* (Tübingen, 1922), pp. 190-205.

<sup>22</sup> Fritz Medicus, "On the Objectivity of Historical Knowledge," in Raymond Klibansky and H. J. Paton, eds., *Philosophy and History; Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer* (Oxford, 1936), pp. 151-58.

<sup>23</sup> George H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, edited by Charles W. Norris (Chicago, 1934), pp. 263-73ff., 300-3, 319-28, 345-46. C. W. Norris, *Signs, Language and Behavior* (New York, 1946), pp. 207-10. Concerning the continuity of a group as long as its "central systems of meanings-norms-values" exist, see P. A. Sorokin, *Society, Culture and Personality*, pp. 153-54, 380-83ff. See also F. Medicus, "On the Objectivity of Historical Knowledge," pp. 138-40ff.; and M. Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, pp. 341-42, 354, 361, 396-98, 424.

<sup>24</sup> M. Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, pp. 326-27, 329, 375-76, 397-98. P. A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, I, 29, 32-33ff., 39-40ff.; IV, 11-40ff., 60-62. P. A. Sorokin, *Society, Culture and Personality*, pp. 147-51.

history. Indeed, the study of history confirms that while particular mystiques pass away, they are always replaced by new ones.<sup>25</sup> The mystique, in short, is one of the permanent and universal motors of society.

<sup>25</sup> Francis Delaisi, *Political Myths and Economic Realities* (London, 1925), p. 64.